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Christian Courier

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Ontario legislation threatens low-income tenants

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO, OTTAWA — The Ontario government has introduced a new Tenant Protection Act which could actually take away the ability of people with low incomes, especially those on social assistance, to find affordable housing. The National Anti-Poverty Organization and several Ontario agencies concerned about low-income housing have criticized the government and asked for changes to the act before it becomes law.

The National Anti-Poverty Association (NAPO) is usually concerned with national issues, but assistant director Mike Farrell explains, "In this particular case, we thought it was important enough to become involved" on a provincial level in Ontario. "Specifically, we didn't want the government to be allowing discrimination against low-income people."

When the Ontario government held hearings on the new legis-

lation during August, two NAPO board members presented their views. Barry Schmidl, Northern Ontario director of NAPO, told the government's standing committee that under the new act "rent control will be dead.... In everything but name, the proposed legislation will do away with any meaningful rent regulation."

Easy eviction

Schmidl criticized the legislation because it would allow new apartments to be free of rent control forever. It would also eliminate the provision in the present Rent Control Act that can prohibit landlords from increasing rents if they do not do required repairs.

The act would also remove landlord-tenant matters of dispute from courts and hand them over to a government-appointed Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, which Schmidl says would allow for "potential patronage



Bruce Porter, co-ordinator of Toronto's Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, believes the tenant law could cause homelessness.

appointments by government and judgment by potentially unqualified ... and unsympathetic individuals."

Another problem Schmidl points out is that landlords

would be allowed to evict tenants more easily and it would be more difficult for tenants to fight such removal because the act would not require landlords to give a formal reason for evict-

ing tenants.

In his presentation, Schmidl concluded, "With cuts to social assistance rates, co-op and non-profit housing, and wholesale slashing and burning of the social, education and health systems in the province, the provincial government has launched, not a 'war on poverty' but a 'war on the poor'."

NAPO is especially critical of two sections of the act which would allow landlords to turn down potential tenants on the basis of income information. This could be used by landlords to discriminate against recipients of social assistance. In a second presentation to the Ontario government, NAPO stated that the act "legalizes and encourages discrimination against the poor, and it deprives the poor of all the protections from discrimination in housing under the Ontario Human Rights Code.... Discrimination against See SOCIAL page 2...

Wealthy Calgary has heart for the poor

Gordon Legge

CALGARY — Stephen Thompson remembers the first person who arrived at Calgary's Inn From the Cold, a shelter for the poor and homeless when it began operation in early May.

"You could see the weariness," Thompson recalls. "You could see him wondering, What's the catch? Where's the trap?"

"Hello, I'm Stephen," he told the man. "Come in and make yourself at home. There's a pot

of coffee over there. Get yourself a cup. We'll be eating dinner in a few minutes."

All that weariness just melted away," says Thompson.

Feeling the Comforter

The following morning, some visitors reported they hadn't slept so well in years. "It was like everything was calm. They could feel the comfort of the Comforter." As guests left St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Calgary's inner city, visitors told volunteers, "This is what churches ought to be like." Despite its evident wealth, Calgary has drawn on its much-touted volunteer spirit to show that the community still has a heart. As social services are trimmed and spun off into the community, local churches are stepping into the breach.

"I'm just thrilled that this is happening," says former social

worker and city alderman Barb Scott, involved with the city's homeless since the 1960s. "The important thing is not the four walls but the interaction these volunteers are having with people who are on the street."

St. Stephen's Anglican is the pilot model for Inn From the Cold, opening its doors every Friday evening until others come on stream. Organizers hope that by the fall there will be between 20 and 30 churches, from the downtown core to the suburban fringes, providing shelter once or twice a month for 10 to 15 guests.

The project began one bitterly

cold day when a city hall committee asked downtown churches what they could do to help deal with the increasing number of homeless. For years, churches had been supporters of the Calgary Urban Project Society, a program established by inner city churches in the late 1980s to provide services, advocacy and referrals for Calgary's street people. Now the city wanted help housing its homeless.

People see only the tip of the iceberg, says Thompson. On any given night, there are hundreds more who remain invisible.

See CALGARY page 3...



Churches in Calgary are working together on "Inn From the Cold."

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News

Social assistance recipients face discrimination

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social assistance recipients is rarely if ever based solely on the source of their income. It is intricately bound up with prejudices and stereotypes about poor people. Landlords will invariably defend their discriminatory policies on the basis that they are concerned about the credit-worthiness of low-income applicants."

At present, the Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits landlords from discriminating against possible tenants based on their being recipients of social assistance. But Ontario plans to change this human rights code provision.

NAPO was involved with recent hearings into income criteria which found no evidence of any correlation between low income and defaulting on rent.

Farrell asserts that the government has been "not particularly interested" in the opinions of NAPO and other agencies that expressed their concerns about the new act.

Another barrier

Stephanie Baker Collins, a researcher with Citizens for Public

B.C., Alberta have better tenant protection than Ontario

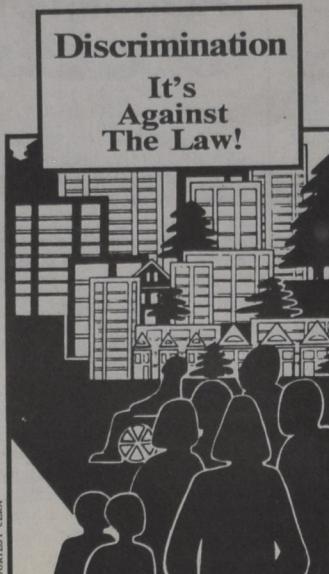
Alan Doerksen

VANCOUVER and EDMONTON — Tenant advocates in British Columbia and Alberta are critical of the Ontario government's proposed Tenant Protection Act. Low-income tenants on social assistance have better protection in Western Canada, they assert.

"This is just poor-bashing in its ugliest form," says Frank Gilbert, community affairs co-ordinator with Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA). When first told about the legislation, he asked, "Is this real?"

Gilbert is especially critical of Ontario's plan to change the human rights code provision that protects social assistance recipients from discrimination. "It's totally ridiculous," he says.

In B.C., he explains, "landlords are not allowed to ask the amount of income or source of income" of potential tenants. Tenant protection laws are "fairly decent." B.C. has no rent controls except that landlords can increase rent no more than once a year. "You have to justify any rental increase." But Gilbert admits that rents in the Vancouver



COURTESY CERA

Justice, says, "From my point of view, it's already quite difficult for people on social assistance to find housing. This will put another barrier in their way.... I think the housing situation for low-income people is going to

get worse."

Government cutbacks in Ontario have affected the poor in several ways, says Baker Collins. "Most visible is significant cuts for people on social assistance. What's less visible is cuts in services." These services include food banks and counselling for people on social assistance.

"The changes this government has made have hit the poor and vulnerable most significantly," she says.

Basis of income

Bruce Porter, co-ordinator of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA — a Toronto-based agency that defends low-income people with housing problems), says the new legislation "hurts everybody." He is especially concerned about the section of the act that would allow landlords to use income information to turn away renters.

Three years ago, the Ontario

Human Rights Commission started a board of inquiry to pursue the cases of three families who claimed to be victims of discrimination by landlords on the basis of income. CERA is representing all three claimants in this case and expects a report soon from the board of inquiry.

Porter expects the board of inquiry to speak out against the unwritten rule that some landlords use in which they turn down potential tenants who need to pay more than 30 per cent of their income for rent. "What the landlords are expecting is this ratio would be legal," he says. In Quebec, this ratio was recently found to be contrary to the Charter, he notes.

"Our fear is that the government wants to overturn the board of inquiry." If that happens, Porter expects the 30 per cent rent-to-income ratio could become a universal standard in Ontario. "The homelessness that results would be quite tragic," he says.

Nobody on social assistance will be able to find an apartment for 30 per cent of their income, so they will be forced to use food money to pay for rent, says

Porter.

Most other provinces have laws protecting social assistance recipients from discrimination, he says. Currently, Ontario landlords may ask for and use income information from tenants but must use it "reasonably."

Rely on private market

The Ontario government has stopped building new housing for people on social assistance, says Porter. The government's policy is that people with low incomes should rely on the private market. But the new act would "severely restrict the choice of apartments" for these people, he asserts.

Porter is especially concerned that the new legislation would involve a change to the human rights code. He says Ontario's opposition parties spoke against that part of the act but were voted down by the governing Progressive Conservatives.

If the government passes the new law, Porter says CERA will "try to limit the damage" of the new rules. CERA is also considering a court challenge to the law if it sees it as violating the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.



Edmonton has had a doubling in food bank use in the past two years.

are forced to use some of their food money to cover rent payments, as in Ontario. As a result, he says, "We've seen a doubling in food bank usage in Edmonton in the past two years."

"For people in social housing, the provisions are adequate," he says, but low-income people in private apartments have a more difficult time supporting themselves.

The Alberta government closely scrutinizes social assistance recipients and cuts off those who do not actively seek

employment or training, says Kreuzer. This is similar to Ontario's "workfare" program.

Kreuzer is critical of the Ontario government for transferring the responsibility for social assistance housing to municipalities. "The municipal tax base wouldn't be able to maintain those costs," he asserts.

Unlike the new Ontario legislation, Alberta laws require landlords to state a reason for evicting tenants, says Kreuzer.

But like B.C., Alberta has no rent controls. As a result,

Kreuzer observes, "people are paying very high proportions of on rent."

Unlike B.C., Alberta is not constructing new social assistance housing. Instead, it is providing rent supplements to social assistance recipients. Alberta has built some housing for people with special needs, such as disabled people, but Kreuzer says, "the needs far outweigh the supply." Alberta currently has "the mood of reduction," as does the Ontario government.

Alberta needs better rules protecting tenants but also needs better enforcement or rules, says Kreuzer. Currently, Alberta's Landlord and Tenant Act "certainly isn't rigorously enforced," he asserts.

The Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness is working to educate landlords about tenants with special needs, such as social assistance recipients or drug users. "We want to encourage a more enlightened landlord," Kreuzer explains. People with problems like drug addiction need not only housing but also "need to be connected to some community so they can integrate back into society."

News

Calgary churches help homeless

... continued from page 1

A city survey a year ago showed that more than 600 homeless either use existing facilities or sleep in public places at night. That's up from 460 in 1994.

Last winter, one of the coldest in memory, dozens of emergency beds were set up, filling the city's local drop-in centre to overflowing. So when church representatives met in early January, it didn't take them long to make a decision. They took their lead from a similar program in Nashville, Tenn., described in a book, *Room In the Inn* by Charles Strobel (Abingdon, 1992), and examined a similar program in Toronto.

They quickly set up a series of sub-committees for areas like food, transportation and accommodation, and set about adapting the Nashville program to meet Calgary's needs. "From January to May is pretty quick, especially for a church group," says Thompson.

Guests are screened by a central agency and then transported by van to that night's shelter, wherever it is in the city. Arriving around 7 p.m. guests are greeted and fed a hot, nourishing meal such as stew, salad, fresh bread and dessert. A cot is provided for the night.

In the morning, the guest is fed a hot breakfast and bused back downtown around 6:45 p.m. As well, since many of the

guests are casual laborers, they're handed a bag lunch as they leave the church.

There's a strict set of behavior guidelines. No one is permitted to use or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Disruptive behavior is not tolerated.

The program is relatively inexpensive. Food costs about \$100 a night. Linen was donated by local hotels. Cots and mattresses cost about \$115 each.

At this point a half dozen other churches are involved, with two set to begin weekly operations during the next month. There are about 130 volunteers from virtually every denomination across the city helping out, with an average of about 20 on staff each night.

Much co-operation

"Volunteers and pastors from the churches ran with it," says Scott, a member of the city's ad hoc committee on the homeless who first asked the churches what they could do. "Once the seed of the idea was planted, they ran with it and brought it to fruition."

Furthermore, there's been remarkable co-operation from the city's professional agencies, who usually tend to be turf-oriented, says Scott. "It's been a wonderful working together of volunteers from a variety of lifestyles with the professionals."

In fact, Thompson said the

biggest problem proved to be co-ordination. The volunteers worked on the assumption that the agencies talked to each other. They didn't. "That caught us off guard," he said.

His advice for others attempting a similar initiative: work out the logistics and co-ordination with all other groups early on for areas like transportation, finding guests, obtaining food. Scott believes the program's potential is tremendous.

Understanding poverty

There's a group of business people who want to see what they can do to create and provide jobs for the city's homeless. And in a city and a province known for its wealth, it offers a tremendous opportunity for Calgarians from all walks of life to develop a better understanding of the needs of the poor and homeless.

"The spin-off for people will be an understanding of poverty in Calgary in 1997," says Scott. Even though it's a church program, there is no direct evangelization. Volunteers are available if someone wants to talk.

"It fits in with my personal theology," says Thompson. "Love God, love your neighbor as yourself; reach out in loving kindness to others. This is what Christianity is about. It's not just Sunday service and rituals. This is a way of life."

Sounds of freedom in Ugandan prison

Brenda Wagner

KAMPALA, Uganda (MCC) — Full rich sounds reached my ears long before I saw where they came from. What I found as I entered Block C at the Luzira Maximum Security Prison surprised me, filling my eyes with tears. Men were gathered in a space resembling a racquetball court.

We entered the area surrounded by high concrete walls, listening to the rhythmic mix of drums, shakers and flute instruments. Deep and high voices blended together enthusiastically. Dressed in white prison clothes, the men moved to the rhythm of the music, clapping their hands and singing.

Mixed emotions surged through me as I joined in singing praises. Surely God was in this place. Barbed wire coiled on top of high concrete walls did not prevent God from entering. God was there in the hearts of those in the room. In the broad smiles, the eyes, the song, along with the music and swaying and clapping, God was there. I was overwhelmed. I was honored to have been invited to this place of worship.

A special understanding

These men were the condemned. They would die by hanging at a time not yet decided. I remembered the biblical passage: "He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief." Jesus, the condemned, on whom the death penalty was carried out. Who better to understand what that means than the men in Block C?

"We'd like to sing the song 'Freedom,'" the choir leader said. Incredible, I thought, as 150 condemned men sat watching me — men sentenced to death but who want to sing 'Freedom.' As the song concluded I knew what freedom was. While the men wait to die, they live because they expect eternal freedom when they are risen again as Jesus was. The lump in my heart rose to my throat and pushed tears from my eyes.

Jesus said true religion is caring for widows, orphans and prisoners. I often wondered why Jesus included prisoners in this list of "the needy." Is it because prisoners understand the freedom that is available in Jesus in ways that we do not? Perhaps in contacts with prisoners we learn of God's grace, of spiritual transformation and freedom available to us in Christ.

Manson cult murderer finds forgiveness, twice

IONE, Calif. (EP) — Convicted murderer Charles "Tex" Watson has received forgiveness for his crimes twice: first, from God when he became a Christian; second, from the daughter of two of his murder victims.

In August of 1969, Watson and three other members of Charles Manson's cultic "Family" stabbed and shot to death seven prominent California citizens in what became one of the U.S.'s most notorious murder sprees. Watson directed the murders of all seven victims, and was the primary killer in the murders of supermarket magnates Leno and Rosemary LaBianca.

Watson lived a normal life before joining Charles Manson's California cult, and was considered a clean-cut, all-American boy. He grew up in a churchgoing Christian home, was a popular high school sports

star and an "A" student. But he became dissatisfied and in 1968 moved to California in search of excitement. Soon he discovered the "Family," a bizarre cult with a charismatic leader named Charles Manson. Watson felt accepted by Manson and quickly became one of Manson's most devoted disciples.

After committing the murders, both Watson and Manson were arrested, tried and sentenced to death. When California repealed its death penalty, however, their sentences were reduced to life in prison. Watson has now served 27 years.

Amazing grace

A recently released Group Productions docudrama video titled "Forgiven: The Charles 'Tex' Watson Story" provides exclusive interviews with Watson, dramatic recreations of life inside the Manson cult and

details of Watson's journey to forgiveness.

After his first six years in jail — years in which he again struggled to find meaning or fulfillment in his life — Watson renounced Charles Manson, calling him "one diabolical man who wanted to be God." Watson became a Christian in 1975, and began training in a ministry program.

Watson had received God's forgiveness, but another improbable experience was still to come. Without telling him who she was, Susan LaBerge, daughter of Watson's victims Leno and Rosemary LaBianca, began writing to Watson in prison.

LaBerge, too, had become a Christian. "I knew that I had to forgive everyone in my life that had done wrong to me, and he [Watson] was part of that," LaBerge says in the Group docu-

drama.

After corresponding with Watson for nearly a year, LaBerge decided to visit him in prison. During their meeting, LaBerge revealed to Watson that she was the daughter of two of his victims.

"Here this person [LaBerge] was sitting there, and although I'd killed her mother, I could tell that she had completely forgiven me," Watson says. "I didn't feel any unforgiveness from her. All I felt was love." Watson asked for LaBerge's forgiveness, which she immediately granted, and the two wept together at the miracle that had taken place.

Helped him confront himself

LaBerge's forgiveness helped Watson grow in his faith and put his past behind him.

"I think what helped me to begin to accept complete

responsibility [for my crimes] was to come face to face with someone that I had tremendously hurt," Watson explains.

LaBerge echoes Watson's experience, and notes that Watson has truly repented. "He's changed his life. He's a good example of what Christ can do."

Later in his prison term, Watson wrote a testimonial about his life and faith. One woman who read the book, Kristin Svege, wrote to Watson and told him of how the book played a role in her own conversion. She and Watson corresponded for the next year and a half, and eventually were married.

In 1980, the Watsons founded Abounding Love Ministries, which reaches out to prisoners throughout North America with the Gospel. Today, Watson continues to witness inside his prison, while Kristin raises the couple's four children.

Editorials

The death of a mother and an icon

The news of Princess Diana's premature death shocked and saddened a lot of people. People genuinely felt a loss when they heard that this fairy-tale princess and caring mother of two boys was violently killed, the apparent victim of media greed and a drunken chauffeur. Most people find it hard to believe that this uncommonly beautiful woman will no longer be around to be admired.

I wondered about this intense outpouring of grief from all over the world. What made us all feel so sad? I myself felt it. And why shouldn't we? But for me there is always the question: is this grieving something we do in Christ, or is it outside our love for him?

More sinned against

It's not hard to realize that Diana was no saint. Her lifestyle betrayed an infatuation with riches and splendor. Her so-called naive and shy appearance had lots practice and art to it. She foolishly "fell in love" with a playboy, known to have discarded other women who no longer suited him. She fed on the paparazzi

that fed on her. Her morals were not above reproach. In a sense, she was a tragic heroine, who partly wrote her own script for the poetic justice that would take her life.

But knowing all that does not remove the sadness we felt. We could so easily identify with this woman who was poorly treated by the royal family, oppressed by a cold palace bureaucracy and an inflexible tradition, shamefully discarded by a puerile and unfaithful Prince of Wales and betrayed by friends. She was more sinned against than sinning.

And she did a lot of good by championing victims of AIDS, leprosy and land mines. She was considered a good mother, someone whom single mothers looked up to as a model. And she was so beautiful. It's hard to watch a beautiful flower crushed.

Are we guilty of worship?

All of this is the human side of identification and sympathy that we feel when a young person dies so tragically. But what about the phenomenon of Diana as an icon? To the extent that people worshipped her, we can say that worship of any human being is foolish. Anyone brought up on the constant reminders in Scripture that "it is better to trust in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes" (Psalm 118:8) will guard him- or herself against thinking too highly of Princess Diana.

But is it wrong to be inspired by her, to take part a little in the fairy tale romance of her life, that was disturbed by divorce and scandal, but that we, nevertheless, want to believe in?

Robert Fulford, in an insightful column in *The Globe and Mail* wrote that death changes everything, even for those who "a few hours earlier ... had held the view that all stories about Lady Diana were trivial.... It turned the Princess of Wales into a historic figure. By dying she became, for the second time, the focus of a major international media event. The first time, of course, was her wedding to Prince Charles in 1981."

According to Fulford we are all spellbound because the media makes us part of a larger community. So true. When Diana and Charles had their spectacular wedding in London, our family interrupted a camping trip and checked into a hotel to view the wedding on television. We love pomp and circumstance because it lifts us out of the doldrums of life into a world of ritual and beauty.

Are we all actors?

But all of this also shows, we believe, that everybody, including presidents and prime ministers, believe the myth and re-enforce it. Diana was larger than life, we were told. She

had to be. Everybody said so.

I personally think that our sadness for someone we don't know and won't miss is the same sadness we experience when watching a tragic play or movie. We put ourselves into the characters and laugh and cry along with them. Princess Diana was a character in a play. Now that we know the plot, we can understand why her life turned into suffering and why she died at such an early age.

So my sadness testifies to the fact that my imagination works well and that I am truly human. I won't moralize about my participation in the theatrical side of life. I will probably watch her funeral as we watched her wedding. And I will cry a little, along with millions of others in my world community.

And then life will go on, and I will face the real pains and pleasures of my own life. Worms, the great equalizers in this world, will destroy Diana's body while writers and moviemakers will try to immortalize her.

And I will remind myself that all the world is not really a stage, a place of make-believe. But it is a created place of meaning and purpose where, through Christ, each one of us has been made equally great, kings and queens in our own right, and where we are urged to fear God and keep his commandments, knowing that God "will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

And then follows the resurrection of the dead and the new life on a sinless earth, without hype and iconography. **BW**

Beware of how you praise human beings

It is not difficult to take away praise from God. George Herbert once wrote a sonnet, lamenting the fact that poets spent too much time comparing roses and lilies to a woman's cheeks or crystal to women's eyes.

"Sure, Lord, there is enough in thee to dry/ Oceans of ink; for as the deluge did/ Cover the earth, so doth thy majesty./ Each cloud distills thy praise, and doth forbid/ Poets to turn it to another use."

Herbert calls this praise of creation rather than the Creator "abuse" of God. He thinks these poets have a "low mind" because they don't bestow "some ink" on God.

"Open the bones, and you shall find/ In the best face but filth, when, Lord, in thee/ The beauty lies in the discovery."

At best, we can say that Diana's beautiful face was but a dim reflection of the beauty of God. Let us give praise to God! **BW**

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Letter

Stretching debate at synod not essential

This is a somewhat long letter, but I don't feel so bad when I see that Messrs. Buursma, Hofman and Dekker took a full page to air their concern re: The growing irrelevance of the CRC synod (CC, Aug. 29). Having read the full-page opinion of these three wise men from the East, I should feel guilty. But I do not.

A few years ago as a member of the Christian Reformed Synodical Interim Committee (SIC) (now called the board of trustees), I suggested we try a one-

week synod. Being at the same time a member of the denominational finance committee I discovered the cost for synodical services was close to \$300,000 (U.S.). For the year 1997-1998 this is expected to be over half a million dollars. Is that good stewardship?

Of course we cannot measure church business in dollars and cents only. But there's nothing wrong with looking into the matter when it comes to cost-cutting. Besides the cost, some business and

professional people are not available to spare two weeks from work or business.

The three retired theologians are concerned about the decline of synodical relevance. Indeed, denominational awareness and loyalty is going downhill. But what can we do about it? Many are interested only in their own little world of local church activities. There are elders and deacons who don't even read the Agenda for Synod, and let the kids play with the Acts of Synod before dumping them in the blue box for recycling. Going back to a two-week synod will not change that indifference.

Lack of deliberation?

It seems the main problem the three writers have is the possible lack of deliberation. They are of the opinion that one week is just not sufficient to deliberate.

Having been delegated to synod seven times, I tend to disagree. When ministers and professors start deliberating, no one can predict the outcome, and time seems to be of no importance. Too many love to hear the sounds of their own voices, and when they start "preaching" for 30 or 40 minutes, we all know it could have been said in 20 minutes.

There was a time when delegates to synods were either ministers or farmers, with the ministers debating and the farmers listening and voting. Fortunately

with more business and professional delegates, this is changing. The new generation is also very much in favor of deliberating, but they know how much time can be wasted unless a capable chairman calls it quits.

Give it a try

I know Dr. Vandervelde reflected on the absence of minority reports, but it seems that only ministers and professors see that as a problem. One gets the impression that they like to see advisory committees deliberate till they are blue in the face and can only be happy when a minority report can be squeezed out of the poor fellows.

The three retired brothers have one good suggestion, and that is to cut the 186 delegates in half and have each classis delegate only one minister and one elder. I am all in favor of having deacons being delegated, but that's another story.

We should appreciate the concern of the three brothers, but why not give one-week synods a try for a few years? After that, I am sure no one will want to go back to two weeks of synod.

These three men may shudder when they hear that I made another motion — to have synod meet every two years instead of once a year. That also can be done.

Klaas Terpstra
Hamilton, Ont.

Opinion

Initiatives on race (U.S. report)

Tony Campolo

As the discussion on race picks up momentum and President Clinton calls for town meetings to discuss race relations, some interesting ideas have emerged from unlikely sources.

I have been particularly intrigued by some of the ideas I have heard coming from certain African-American clergy. One such idea is that in order to help inner city children, we ought to change the child labor laws. Specifically, the law should allow young people as young as 12 years old to be gainfully employed at a wage level that is below the present minimum wage. This idea is based on the fact that these under-aged young people in urban ghettos often have a desire to earn money, both to meet their own needs and to help out their families.

An equally important reason for allowing young people in their early teens to be employed in legal businesses is that it will enable them to learn the skills, develop the work ethic and acquire the habits that are essential to succeed in our society.

There are so many bad things that young people in the city can get into, and jobs during after-school hours and during the summer would help to keep a lot of them out of trouble. A lower-than-minimum wage would encourage employers to hire them.

The child labor laws that are currently on the books were for another time in American life. A hundred years ago we needed those laws to keep children from being exploited at a time when desperate families had them working long hours in sweat shops and coal mines. Things have changed. Today we need new laws that will protect young workers, on the one hand, while at the same time encourage them to become contributing members of society on the other. Work is a good thing (1 Thess. 4:11) and if we are going to keep urban youth out of the lucrative drug trade, we have to consider how to legitimately enable them to get jobs.

Distinctly African-American initiative

Another idea that has surfaced had been suggested by one of the most militant African-American pastors I know. This is a young leader who has been connected with many other young African-American pastors across the country. Together they envision a campaign that will encourage chastity among teenagers prior to marriage.

One existing program created by the Southern Baptist Convention, called "True Love Waits," has challenged tens of thousands of young people to remain chaste before marriage. However, my friend says that this program has not had much of an impact on the black community.

He says that there is a need for a distinctly African-American initiative with which black youth can readily identify. He wants President Clinton to lend his support to this effort, and thus give to it the kind of visibility that it needs to get off the ground.

Both of these initiatives have my endorsement because they silence those racists who argue that all African-American leaders ever do is to demand their rights. Well, here is evidence that they are more than ready to assume responsibility for what happens in the black community. It is time for the rest of Americans, including the President, to hear them out on these initiatives and to get behind them.

Tony Campolo is the director of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education in St. Davids, Penn.

Mother Teresa

At the time of our going to press, the news broke that Mother Teresa has died. We hope to focus on her life in our next issue.

Editor

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My husband



"Often at day's end the calloused hands gently pick up a Fender guitar."

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Meet my best friend, a man of contrasts. Let's start with the eyes, truly the window to this man's soul. Enormous and blue, they are perfectly fringed with enviable dark lashes. They can be clear and calculating, or pensive and distant. They might dance with mischief or mist over with sorrow. Brows black and full highlight the eyes. When he's angry, the brows converge like two dark thunderclouds in the midst of a furrowed forehead. When he's amused, they rise in levity, apparently defying gravity and all serious thought. You need not wonder where you stand with this individual — he is always blunt, never dull.

He was raised in the hustle and bustle of the city but prefers the quieter surroundings of the country. There were times in his life when all daylight hours were spent inside the confines of a factory's walls. These days as a farmer he is free to enjoy the sunshine or endure the rain. A strong Calvinist work ethic is integral to his personality, making it a labor to take time for vacation.

However, as busy as he is, he

needs time to reflect and relax. Often at day's end the calloused hands gently pick up a Fender guitar. His fingers are stained with the indelible residue of grease from yet another day of repairing ancient farm machinery. Deftly they pluck and strum the steel-stringed instrument, transforming the farmer into a musician.

From Bonhoeffer to Star Trek

This is a man who contemplates the profundities of Bonhoeffer as if they were precious gems. He is also easily entertained by the crew of the *U.S.S. Enterprise*.

There is a cool confidence about him that is sometimes belied by traces of insecurity. I smile when I think of how he asked me three times what my hypothetical answer would be if he were to hypothetically ask me to marry him. Only after triple assurances did he dare pose the question in earnest.

Many times I have seen him outraged and frustrated at the injustices of this world, but always there is evidence of a deep and abiding peace that can only

The mind of Christ

"But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them... but we can understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:14a&16b, New Living Translation).

Upon reading "First Bride," a short story by James Schaap published in the *Christian Courier* several weeks ago, I was left with one question: "At the conclusion of the story, how could the narrator — who was obviously a worldly wise non-Christian — proclaim such profound Christian truth? I reread the story thinking I might have missed something. I was still confused. If I ever met James Schaap, I'd ask him.

With the story still fresh in my mind, just two weeks later, who should I see but the author himself. Marty and I had just driven the 18-hour trip to Sioux Center, Iowa, with our daughter Angela so she could register at Dordt College. We were at a parent and staff lawn social — just one of the many events Dordt sponsors to assure the parents of freshmen that their precious children are in caring Christian hands.

Brief encounter

Professor Schaap stood just metres away in animated conversation with another couple. Several minutes later my eyes followed him as he walked across the lawn over to a path where he paused to talk to a foursome.

The biology professor Marty and I happened to be chatting with must have noticed my rudely wandering eyes and my disappointed look. He kindly offered to introduce us, which he promptly did.

Alas, I wasn't able to get beyond a few gushing remarks about his colorful writing style, before Professor Schaap moved on to another conversation with someone else. My question was left, unasked.

But then, the next day who should sit down beside Marty in church but James Schaap himself. They conversed amiably. Marty mentioned

come from knowing a higher power is in control.

Looking back, I think he unwittingly summed it all up on our first date. We were both more than a little nervous as we pulled out of the driveway. He suavely put on his sunglasses, only to watch one lens pop out and fly across the dashboard. Grinning at me with one eye shaded and the other exposed, he drawled, "Like I always say, 'Ya gotta keep 'em guessing!'" Twenty years later, I believe he meant it!

Heidi VanDerSlikke and her family live in Harrison, Ont. This story was awarded first prize for the Novice Entry at the God Uses Ink conference of 1997.

Slice of Bread



Marian den Boer

that I write for *Christian Courier*. James told him the *Courier* had just printed one of his stories. This was my opening. I leaned across Marty and blurted, "I have a question about that story." At that point the minister walked up to the pulpit and the church service began.

The Scripture reading was taken from 1 Corinthians 2 (see verses quoted at the beginning of this column.)

In good hands

Over coffee outside under spreading maples, Professor Schaap, cookie in hand, approached me, "Give it to me!" he challenged.

"The main character was a non-Christian?" I began.

"Yes," he agreed.

"Well, how did he get such a mind of Christ? I had trouble believing he was capable of thinking such Christian thoughts without being a believer."

Then Dr. Schaap explained there were two more paragraphs at the end of that story. The paragraphs had been edited out.

I was indignant. "They can't do that. It changes the credibility of the character."

Professor Schaap didn't agree. The editors had simply made the story more open-ended ... more art. He explained to me about views on propaganda and art. I possibly wanted my stories more closed (James' mother does), never mind if they sound like Christian propaganda.

He promised to send me the two paragraphs. I hope Angela ends up in his class.

Marian den Boer lives with her husband Marty and five children in Hamilton, Ont. Their oldest child has been left in good hands at Dordt College.



The reason we rarely vacationed?

Arts/Media

Film Review

Mrs. Brown a familiar royal figure?

Marian Van Til

Mrs. Brown

Rated PG. Stars Judi Dench, Billy Connolly, Antony Sher, Geoffrey Palmer. Written by Jeremy Brock. Directed by John Madden.

The person of Queen Victoria evokes a picture of a short, plump, darkly dressed woman with hair pulled back in a bun from a severe-looking face; the dour, doughty British monarch whose longest-ever reign characterized the prim and proper but imperial age which came to bear her name — the last six decades of the 19th century.

This film, based on accounts of people at Victoria's court (and undoubtedly on some informed speculation), gives us another picture of Victoria: a glimpse of her as a feeling human being, albeit one whose feelings were distorted and confined by the royal institutions and aristocracy which reared her. (Does this sound familiar? Parallels with the present tempt one to view the British monarchy as a history of upper-class English emotional dysfunctionism.)

However, the emphasis here is not on the dysfunctionalism as such, but on a refreshing breeze of normalcy brought to the Queen by a "mere" Scottish horseman in her service, a man named John Brown.

Three years of mourning

It has long been noted that, whatever Victoria's shortcomings, she had an unusual and happy marriage to her cousin,

*"Mr. and Mrs. Brown"*

Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. The film contends, probably rightly, that it was the happiest marriage in the history of the British monarchy. Thus, when Albert died in 1861 of typhoid fever in their 21st year of marriage, Victoria was inconsolable.

The film picks up the story in 1864, with Victoria (Dame Judi Dench) still in mourning at Balmoral, the royal palace tucked away in the Scottish highlands. She refuses to let the court get back to everyday business or to let her courtiers live normal lives; nor will she return to London and Buckingham palace where her subjects can see her.

Her continued public grieving

starts to wear on the court, not only, but on parliament and the public. Her popularity slips, as does the popularity of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (Antony Sher) and his Tories.

Finally Sir Henry Ponsonby (Geoffrey Palmer), Victoria's private secretary, sends for John Brown, who had been a favorite of Albert's. It is hoped the Queen will consent to letting Brown take her riding out in the fresh air, and that the activity and change of scenery will end her fixation on her dead husband.

Too successful

Brown succeeds in a way no one anticipates. Though a ser-

vant, his straightforward manner with her, his devotion to her as his Queen, and his keen discernment of her emotional needs (which she doesn't understand herself) gradually make him Victoria's confidant. She eventually refers to him as her best friend, a scandal both to her class-conscious advisors and to the other servants.

Clearly she enjoys Brown's company, and his presence helps assuage her grief. But the relationship (which was undoubtedly a close friendship but not more) causes tongues to wag. Speculation abounds — thus the snide reference to the Queen as "Mrs. Brown."

This was not necessarily an implication of a sexual relationship, but certainly an acknowledgment of Victoria's emotional dependence on John Brown, equally unthinkable in that setting. Brown, for his part, adds to the speculation by becoming possessive, and then obsessive, about the Queen and her safety.

Satisfying performances

The main strength of *Mrs. Brown* is the performances of its two leading players. The acting career of Judi Dench has been grounded in the British theatre, but she has by now also appeared in numerous films in a wide range of roles.

In her adept hands we see Queen Victoria evolve from a royal personage who ignores her volatile emotions by keeping them tightly under wraps to a woman who wants to be allowed to be a real human being rather than a figurehead. Dench achieves this elusive transformation through little more than subtle facial expressions and

controlled body language.

Billy Connolly's performance is perhaps more artful than Dench's when you know that by trade he's a comedian, not an actor, much less a dramatic

*Queen Victoria*

actor. In his hands it's quite easy to believe that John Brown's bold and unorthodox behavior would touch the formidable Queen's heart.

The wider circle of roles includes Prime Minister Disraeli, various members of parliament, Sir Henry Ponsonby and other personal advisors to the Queen, roomfuls of servants, and a younger brother of Brown's. Whether Brown actually had a brother in the service of the Queen is a moot point; the character serves well as a medium through whom we get to know Brown better.

If character studies intrigue you, this is your kind of movie. And given the tragic death of Princess Diana two weeks ago, and the consequent focus on the royal family and many of the places featured in this film, watching it now provides unanticipated tie-ins to the present.

Schubert chose integrity over wealth

1997 is the 200th birth anniversary of Franz Schubert

ZPS — Listening to Schubert's music, especially the hundreds of beautiful songs that flowed from his pen, the simple sincerity of the composer's soul is evident. His music is transparent and is seldom mistaken for works of any other composer. He refused to look upon his talent as a tool for making money. Rather, he poured out his heart into every work.

Diertrich Fischer-Dieskau, famed for singing Schubert

Lieder has said, "No matter how great our admiration for Schubert may be, we [those who perform his songs] only realize later in life what it is that raised him far above the level of other composers Schubert is authentic."

Schubert never effected false pretences, either in his music or in his life. No wonder he made many friends. Those around him believed that they really knew the whole man, without reservation, and they were right. In the stuffy, ostentatious society of Vienna, such openness and simplicity must have been a

breath of fresh air.

In retrospect, Schubert clearly made mistakes in his life that inevitably resulted in devastating consequences. Yet in his principal calling, to be an original and innovative composer, he refused to compromise. Doubtless he could have achieved greater financial success writing trite nonsense for the multitudes. For Schubert, this would have been flagrant duplicity.

The immediate price for this sincerity was far greater than the absence of universal fame: It resulted in a life of impoverishment. But the fruit of this sac-

rifice is still being appreciated by generations who have loved the beauty and simplicity of Schubert's many works. Had this composer been anything less than sincere, he might have opted to seize immediate gratification. Instead, he chose the way of integrity, and we reap the rewards of his legacy.

This excerpt was taken from the book, Music of the Great Composers: A Listener's Guide to the Best Classical Music, by Patrick Kavanaugh, published by Zondervan and available at your local bookstore or by calling 1-800-727-3480.

*Franz Schubert*

Church

Colombia's military monitoring seminaries

Kenneth D. MacHarg

QUITO, Ecuador (Compass)

The Colombian military is reported to be keeping a close watch on the activities of several seminaries after closing a Mennonite institute last December.

Ricardo Esquiva, director of the Seminary for Peace, said that the army, frustrated by growing resistance to military recruitment in the face of an upsurge in Colombia's civil war, has started to monitor evangelical seminaries, whose students are exempt from military service.

Esquiva said that in addition to his institution, military authorities are investigating the Latin American Faculty of

Theology and the Seminary of the Church of the Cross.

The Mennonite Biblical Seminary and the Christian Center "Justapaz" were closed last December at the request of the armed forces.

Rights violation

The order is still in judicial process. Esquiva said the military request was approved by the Secretary for Education without observing the completion of legal procedures.

The Mennonite Church of Colombia has denounced the violation of its rights by the government. In a statement, the church claims the armed forces are persecuting the Mennonite

church.

According to the document, the refusal of the Armed Forces to recognize the right to postpone military service is a nega-

tion of "the right to religious freedom and the freedom of conscience of young people."

Meanwhile, Esquiva says that the Seminary for Peace will con-

tinue its activities while under investigation by the intelligence service and the anti-terrorist police.

'Kits 4 Kids' to create Christmas parcels for Romanian orphans

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRWRC) — About 2,000 orphans living in Romanian orphanages will receive Christmas parcels in early December, thanks to a joint effort involving four organizations.

The program is called "Kits 4 Kids," and it is jointly sponsored by Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund, The Bible League of Canada and the Romanian Orphans Fund.

Seeing the need

The four groups got together in early spring to respond to a significant need among Romanian orphans. Indications are between 150,000 and 200,000 children from newborn to mid-teens live in more than 600 orphanages.

The four groups decided to arrange for 2,000 parcels in this first year, and those numbers are expected to increase yearly as Kits 4 Kids gains popularity. Mailings went out in late August to every Christian Reformed and

Canadian Reformed congregation in Canada. The mailings included cover letters, brochures and posters explaining the program. "At least three persons per congregation were targeted for the mailing, with the intention that it reach at least one decision-maker," says Arlene Bennink, who along with Jeanette Groenewegen acts as volunteer co-ordinator for the fall campaign.

An accompanying brochure suggests that personal contents in the kit should have a combined value of about \$20. The groups taking part in the program will be asked to prepare the kits for either boys or girls of specific ages.

Each parcel will be accompanied by a Bible, a Marian School and Story Bible and Bible study materials. The Bibles will be personally handed to each child, along with the parcel, by Romanian volunteers connected to The Bible League and the Romanian Orphans Fund.

The cost of getting the parcels from the congregation to The

Bible League's warehouse space in Bucharest will be borne by the participating individuals or groups. They are asked to pay \$10 per parcel for shipping and Bible materials.

Expect good response

Kits 4 Kids committee chair Rick DeGraaf says he expects a good response from the churches. "It will be a first-come, first-served situation. Once the churches receive their mailing, they will be asked to appoint one person to organize it within the congregation and then to let the volunteer co-ordinators know just how many they want to fill."

A cardboard box manufacturer has agreed to donate just over 2,000 shoebox-sized boxes. They will be shipped to participating churches once they have placed their orders.

CRWRC, The Bible League and the Romanian Orphans Fund will have staff people in Romania who will oversee the distribution of the Kits 4 Kids once they arrive in Bucharest.

Dutch church to sell bargain-priced heroin

ROTTERDAM, the Netherlands (EP) — A Dutch church plans to begin selling bargain-priced heroin this fall under a program organized by a Rotter-

dam clergyman.

Hans Visser, a Protestant minister in the port city of Rotterdam, will co-operate with local doctors and social workers in

the program. His Pauluskerk will initially supply a test group of 10 heroin addicts who are believed to have no chance of breaking their addiction.

"It is the best [heroin] that's for sale, abroad as well," Visser boasted to a Dutch news agency. The pastor said he has found several heroin dealers who will provide the drug to the church at cost.

Visser launched his scheme after a similar plan became bogged down in the national government. He does not have permission for the program. A Rotterdam official has condemned the plan as "incomprehensible," while another said she is referring to the matter to the Justice Ministry.

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Church

Your job isn't your calling

I recall a sermon illustration I heard when I was about 10 years old. It was a story about a theological professor at the Free University in Amsterdam who went for a stroll along the canal. Then he saw a street sweeper. He stepped up to the man, put his hand on his shoulder and said: "You are working in the light of eternity; you are fulfilling your calling before God."

We loved such a story because those professors were our leaders and we admired them. We also loved what the professor said about work: he put himself on a basis of equality with the street sweeper, both fulfilling a calling before the face of God.

Good example of a bad doctrine

Today I believe that that story is a good illustration of a bad doctrine. It shows an understanding of divine calling that can sanctify a lot of drudgery and three-dollar-an-hour jobs. When we say that any work people happen to do is a "calling from God" we have a powerful weapon to keep laborers in line and women in the kitchen.

The teaching that one's job is one's calling is the degeneration of a good doctrine rediscovered at the time of the Reformation. Prior to the Reformation only "spiritual" people had a "vocation." When you said "I have a calling" you were headed for a monastery.

The Reformation brought a whole new approach to life and work. All work of the redeemed, if obediently done, should be considered worship of God, service of one's neighbor, enrichment of life, fulfillment of our mandate.

There was also one specific text that played an important role in conversations about work and calling: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (1 Cor. 7:20, KJV).

The text says that, if a person is called to be



Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
Al Wolters

a Christian while a slave or a slave-owner, a Jew or a Gentile, this situation should not be considered an obstacle to fulfilling one's calling as a Christian. "Remain in the situation in which you were called." Obey your Christian calling in that situation.

But the Bible does not teach that your job is your calling. Our "calling" is to be Christians. The Reformers meant to say that we can live as prophets-priests-queens (i.e., fulfil our Christian calling) in any ordinary and decent job.

In the days when I heard the sermon illustration of the professor and the street sweeper we had already made the fateful mistake of considering the job a "calling" from God.

We took for granted that the whole social order was an expression of God's will. And it was assumed that individual Christians took their places in this social order by diligently pursuing their trade. If you applied yourself to your job diligently, you fulfilled your "calling."

Called to be Christians

Some readers will readily recall this understanding of life and work. It made for good tradespeople and faithful hired helpers. But it also made us believe that the street sweeper was called to remain a street sweeper.

The Biblical teaching is not that we are called to be street sweepers or professors, but to be Christians. And your ordinary job (any ordinary but decent occupation) can be the avenue through which we fulfil our calling.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven seeks to fulfil his calling as a retired pastor of the Christian Reformed Church. He lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Bible League reaches two milestones

SOUTH HOLLAND, Ill. (TBL) — The Bible League has passed two milestones in its 59th year of operation. Through its placement of Bibles around the world, the League has now helped 10,000 new churches get started, and has seen one million new converts baptized into church membership in the last 10 years. The League began keeping these records in 1987, though it has placed Bibles since 1938.

The Bible League is based in South Holland, Ill., and also has offices near Toronto.

As its name implies, The Bible League places Bibles — anywhere they are needed. It does this through Christian na-

tions in the countries in which it operates who are trained by The League in evangelization, discipling new believers and organizing those believers into fellowship with other Christians. The Bibles are these church workers' most effective tool.

'Pray, send us Bibles'

The 10,000th church was established in the Philippines in July. During that month 32,754 Filipinos graduated from a Bible study and received their first Bible. Over 1,000 people in the Philippines graduate from these Bible studies each day.

This scenario is repeated throughout the world, even in communist and Muslim coun-

tries, where persecution can be severe. New Christians in such places will often risk harassment, imprisonment, torture, slavery and even death for the sake of a Bible. The Bible League has been told by many nationals experiencing persecution, "We do not ask you to pray for persecution to stop. Pray that we will be strong. And send us Bibles."

Since its inception, The League has placed more than 530 million Scriptures in 90 countries. But the proof that these Bibles have had an impact is the 10,000 churches started and the one million believers baptized into those churches in just 10 years' time.

Churches to be taxed in Nigeria?

Obed Minchakpu

JOS, Nigeria (Compass) — There are strong indications that churches in Nigeria may soon be asked to pay taxes to the government in order to boost its revenue base.

Compass sources are saying that the Nigerian government has already enacted a decree which will soon be signed into law by Nigeria's head of state, General Sani Abacha, empowering the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) to tax churches.

Reports of possible church taxation have led to open criticism of the government by Christian leaders who see it as a threatening move, clearly demonstrating the government's insensitivity to the religious liberty of all Nigerians.

Addressing a press conference on this issue, the president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Archbishop Benson Idahosa, described the idea of church taxation as "an impossible act of insurrection against the Church of Jesus Christ."

Intent to persecute

The National secretary-general of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Charles Williams, observed that the idea of levying churches is nothing other than the intent to persecute the church in Nigeria. He believes that just as it happened in the life of the early church when the church was persecuted, the saints martyred, and the Bible became an object of exhibition in museums, the Nigerian church is today being turned into a body to be hunted, discriminated against and persecuted.

Speaking for the Methodist church of Nigeria, Rev. Deji Okegbih observed that the idea of levying churches "is a message from the pit of hell with an anti-Christ inclination."

Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Badejo, the social communications sec-

retary for the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, held that, "The idea of taxing churches should not have arisen at all. The church as the Body of Christ is the only body that can cushion the effect of psychological imbalances in the masses."

This alleged move by the government of Nigeria is being made despite the provisions of section 19 (1) of the Companies Income Tax Act of 1979, which exempts the taxation of incomes and revenue of churches, mosques and other religious organizations.

Government claims ignorance

Reacting to the open criticism of the government on the planned taxation on churches, Mrs. Teju Ladejobi, head of corporate affairs for FIRS, denied that her organization has been directed to tax churches. "FIRS is not aware of any decree to that effect which has been drafted and is awaiting the signature of the head of state, as is being claimed," she claimed.

Despite the denial by the FIRS, *Compass* was informed by a reliable government source that the plan to tax churches is a reality, and that the government has back-pedaled for now only because of the critical stand the church has taken. The source said, however, that there is no doubt that at the appropriate time, the government plans to implement the decision to tax churches.

The national president of CAN and prelate of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Rev. Dr. Sunday Mbang said, while he is against the moves to tax churches in Nigeria, church leaders themselves must refrain from "ostentatious lifestyles" which create the impression that the church is a booming business empire in a depressed economy.

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Feature

We are not pilgrims!

We are called to build tent cities in God's world

Calvin Seerveld

I believe that this world belongs to God who created it (Ps. 24:1-2, Job 40:6-41:34). So as a human creature I am at home in God's world of marvels, from the eclipse of the sun to the birth of a baby (Ps. 145-150).

And I believe that Christians, as God's word of Ephesians says, are "no longer strangers and sojourners" on earth but are "the intimate household of God" — the very place where God the Holy Spirit hangs out (Eph. 2:19-22) till Christ comes again!

That's a core of what I believe.

Before I formulate two injunctions which follow from my being at home here in God's creation while facing the North American culture of Mammon — expectant of the Lord's return to end my sin, the cruelty of neighbors to strangers, the tears and pain of cancer, injustice, greed — let me say something about the biblical idea of being a "pilgrim."

Biblical note on 'pilgrim'

Before Exodus in the Bible comes Genesis, and after Peter's pastoral letters in the Bible comes John's Revelation of what's finally going to happen. To note that booked order of the Bible about the beginning and ending of history is important so we not define our human meaning as being one of exodus and pilgrim, as strangers passing through a foreign land.

If you think as if the Bible starts with Exodus, you are likely to exaggerate liberation from the evil powers of the "Egyptian establishment" and promote historical subversion or fervent prayer to get to heaven and out of here.

The fact that Genesis is first and establishes that the human

generations are here to cultivate the LORD's garden (ever before sin laid us waste, Gen. 1:26-31), takes away any obsession for us to have to go somewhere else than the world where God purposely placed us, man and woman.

The inspired fisherman-turned-evangelist, Peter, refers in his letters to the persecuted Jewish Christians dispersed throughout Asia Minor as exiles sojourning, resident aliens in godless lands (1 Peter 1:1-2, 2:11-17). But at the same time he reminds them that they are really "a royal priesthood" with "an indestructible inheritance" Christ is bringing back from heaven (1 Peter 2:5,9-10, 1:3-5).

And that return-to-earth theme is the very resounding climax of the last book of the Bible, reaching beyond "the Hebrews" who missed the promised patrimony (Heb. 11:13-16, 39-40); the holy city of God shall descend from heaven and God [himself] will live among [his] people fully restored from every nation under the sun, while rulers of the earth bring their cultural treasures purified into this celebrative feast for the Lamb on the new earth under an unpolluted sky world without end (Rev. 21:1-4, 22:1-5).

No strangers to earth

As I searched the Scriptures to prepare these remarks I discovered, to my surprise, it is less than biblical to think of yourself as one in the vocation of "pilgrim"! We who are in Christ, children of God, Creator of this world, are not wandering Jews, not Muslim pilgrims, not secular nomads.

Sin and godless culture may make us feel sometimes like aliens and exiles. But humans are not cosmic strangers to God's world, and the Holy Spirit-filled body of single professional nurses, mothers and fathers of families, lawyers, bankers, garbage collectors (now called "solid waste disposal and recycling

specialists"), teachers or unskilled laborers: we humans are defined by the task to tend obediently to the earth with the gifts the Lord who is a-coming gave us (Ps. 115:16-18, Matt. 25, Eph. 4:1-16).

It's true, Scripture says we humans do not own anything outright; everything "in our possession" is on loan from God, held by us in trust, including our precious lifetime of 70 or 80 years. That's why the LORD God forbade the Israelites selling any land "in perpetuity" and instituted sabbatical years and the Year of Jubilee, so rich "Christian" nations could after awhile forgive two-thirds-world peoples their debts (Lev. 25).

Fixed on Christ

A world-flight policy, however, is wrong-headed, says our Lord. Anybody willing to give up what is valuable to him or her for the sake of God's redemptive rule will receive it all back a hundredfold in these days (with persecution!) as well as in the coming age, which shall endure forever (Luke 18:18-30, Matt. 10:16-33, Col. 2:8-23).

Therefore, dear reader, if you already enjoy a heavenly citizenship (Phil. 3:20-4:1), keep your orientation fixed on the ascended Christ, who indeed has the power to rule human culture now, engaging us as apprentices (Col. 3:1-17). Keep that eschatonic vision of Christ's triumphal reclamation of culture coming vivid in your consciousness as you weather the tussle of history in your generation.

I know, there is a long-standing habit of ascetic Christianity, from John the Baptist's disciples who did not pick and eat corn on the Sabbath or drink wine at weddings, to Non-conformist Puritan John Bunyan's solitary Pilgrim named "Christian" who resolutely left the City of Destruction and slowly progressed to the Celestial City on the other side of the dark rolling river. I respect such serious pilgrims.

But it is wrong, I think, to make an ascetic pilgrimage the norm for Christian living. It is not the full counsel of God, as Paul puts it (Acts 20:17-27), to order life negatively in God's world, denying oneself things, making constant sacrifices, since "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected provided it be received with thanksgiving, for then it is made holy by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

Creational injunction

Be joyfully thankful for creaturely gifts. It is the amazing grace of God which elicits wonder from children who discover at a seashore the laughing pleasure of having mud ooze in between your toes and of feeling the unexpected slap of God's wetness on your bare back flung from a tumbling wave. It is a gift of God to go fly a kite and receive the nuanced knowledge of the wiggle of wind and the tug of air currents.

And the LORD is glad for us to find out that trees are sexual, that butterflies grow out of caterpillars, and gorillas, in a normative zoo chewing on carrots, are looking at us too. It is a great blessing for us humans to realize God's sand, water, plants and animals are co-creatures with us and, like the sun, praise God more faithfully in their way than do we (Psalms 8, 19, 104).

The good creation

I'll never forget the lighting and people movements around where I lay sprawled between the kitchen and the dining room in my childhood home when, precisely at 10 minutes past six o'clock on Saturday evening, Sept. 5, 1936 — as I was following the large print in a book before me, perusing it on the floor — suddenly I discovered I could read.

"I can read! I can read!" I hollered, and ran to my mother doing dishes in the kitchen, and she had to stop and listen to me haltingly read. To make sense

suddenly out of mute written marks on paper seems almost like a miracle to the illiterate.

It may take a while after a girl develops breasts and a boy experiences an erection to become at home in your sexual corporeality. But the erotic solar plexus of shame and intimacy and mutual truth is an exquisite, playful place in God's creation rich with poetry and caresses. It is a great privilege to enter and inhabit that place.

Picking strawberries or wild huckleberries, fruit of vine and bush, free in the fields; or not being blind to that soft incandescent sunlight after a supper hour when green foliage turns golden and shimmers like a bewitching hour; or the ability to weep quietly after someone you love has been inexplicably, deeply hurt: God sees all these creaturely affairs and it is still good! (cf. Gen. 1).

Be at home

So, to bypass daily creaturely realities provided us personally by God as if you have to get somewhere else for a special blessing or an oracle — to Delphi, Mecca, Lourdes, to "do" Jerusalem as a tourist, or even to ascend to heaven — is to be ungrateful to our saving Creator Lord.

Therefore, being fundamentally at home here as human creatures in God's creation entails a way of life focussed in a joyful thankfulness to the LORD for all God's creaturely gifts. This orientation is basic to a reformatory Christian worldview.

The whole third part of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563) affirms this position by exposing the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer as what structures the gratitude believers evidence after becoming holy-spirited redeemed sinners in God's world.

Redemptive imperative

Because the North American way of life is so deadly, God's redeemed people should not go on pilgrimages! They should be building tent cities of refuge in

stead inside the Babylonian Empire. Communal redemptive cultivation of the earth constitutes bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to your neighbor.

That's the way it always happens: in whatever area of culture Christ's Body does a no-show, understandably that cultural arena goes to hell. If parents don't like the movies and videos available for their children to see, has it ever occurred to them to pray for us to ferment condi-

shalom.

The long haul

To work communally at a redemptive culture in our secularized age sounds unreal unless you have a convicted, full-orbed reformational biblical vision of God's sovereign rule over every bit of creation, and a biblical patience for the long haul.

If you wanted to reform the scatological cabaret of *Second*

down to earth as a healthy diet set up by parents for their children and house guests of which you eat more and weigh less so that fast food and junk food wrapped in plastic tastes counterfeit, like something oversweet.

A Christian philosophy which humbles theoretical thinking and can integrate encyclopedically emotional, social, ethical and economic facets of life is a welcome refuge of meaning at the

not prevail over the meek.

If the worshipping church gives only lip service to its confessing members who are struggling to serve the Lord in a Christian labor union in a motley community of artistic saints reaching out to passersby, then that organized ecclesiastical communion should be ashamed of itself. Such church leaders who may make pious pronouncements are still false to the godly calling of being per-

4:6-10) through our ministrations, as we wait expectantly for the Lord to return to complete Christ's rule of creation.

Our daily work of parenting, journalism, nursing, buying and selling, or whatever it be that keeps us busy, fulfills the law of Christ, says Scripture, only if it is a channel of loving your neighbor, bearing their burdens (Rom. 13:8-10, Gal. 5:22-6:2), not nitpicking whether the "I" in your own particular orthodoxy and orthopraxy be perfectly crossed or not.

So the only "pilgrimage" we royal priests are asked to make is to the worshipping church gathered on the weekly day of celebrative rest (Heb. 10:19-25; cf. Ps. 122) where we may hear God's sure Word proclaimed about the little stone not cut by human hands which shall someday shatter the godless kingdoms in this world (Dan. 2:1-45). And we may feast on the eucharist — thanksgiving! — while we sing, particularly, the medley of Psalms 120-134 as we gird up our loins for daily life where the joy is still tempered by tears.

We are not fugitives on the earth, not undercover agents, but "anointed ones" of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q/A #32), called to build Spirit-filled tent cities of refuge even as we suffer being laughed at because of the sin that still captivates us and wastes our thanksgiving.

We look forward to the cataclysmic return of Jesus Christ, when right-doing shall indeed finally be completely at home in God's world (2 Pet. 3:8-13). And we adopted children of God are assured by Psalm 23 that the Lord will give us what we need — even in the presence of enemies — to stay faithful, preserved in the hope of our Lord's coming.



George's Langbroek's colorful etching mixes fragments of artworks (Picasso's *Guernica*, Gericault's *Raft of Medusa*, Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters*)

with current newspaper images of Vietnamese boatpeople and starving two-thirds world children, while a Swiss Red Cross person grasps a crying, displaced child above the fray.

The abstracting yellow against watery blue silhouettes the figures almost like a TV screen — is their loss and search for Home real? At the left is a bloody red band depicting someone tending care to a naked, sick woman.

This artwork illuminates the plight of homeless refugees focussed in the Christian act of visiting the helpless and providing relief amid the evil.

tions where, over time, a body of informed, professionally competent young Christians could together eventually produce cinema for their great-grandchildren and neighbors? Cinema that would be more than travelogues to Golgotha for showing in church basements or general audience flicks with Hollywoodish happy endings.

Jesus himself prayed fervently to God (John 17) not to take his disciples out of this world, but to keep them from succumbing to the evil one as they went into the world to bring healing, the gospel of forgiveness and redirection in cultivating

City in downtown Chicago, or at the *Doofpot* in Amsterdam, it would take at least a generation to develop a repertoire of redemptive jokes that could catch the secularist off guard and draw a puzzled laugh.

Many evangelical Christians want to get you saved, brother or sister, but after you've made the decision to stand up for Jesus, how do you then live in God's world?

Achievable goals

I don't have something esoteric or idealistic in mind with "post-Pentecostal tent cities of refuge," but something as

over-specialized secular "multiversity." Such a philosophy can sort out misformulated dilemmas and locate good openings for analysis.

A collection of short stories like Hugh Cook's *Cracked Wheat* (1985), George Langbroek's viscosity etching *Home* (1996), Peter Maxwell Davies' "Eight Songs for a Mad King" (1969), can be places for discouraged unfortunates to take shelter for the time being, get their bearings, to be gentled by wry critique and trenchant insight so that he or she recognizes, thank God, that evil and power-mongering shall finally

secuted along with God's people who suffer discrimination in our secularized daily life.

Anointed agents of the Kingdom

So for me, the most biblical root metaphor for human lives which would be obedient to the LORD is for Christ's followers to be not pilgrims en route to heaven but a remnant community of royal priests in the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110, Heb. 4:14-8:13). We must build tent cities of refuge in the very citadels of secularized culture for the outcasts God still wants to save and sanctify (cf. 1 Tim.

Dr. Calvin Seerveld is senior member in philosophical aesthetics, emeritus, at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto. This article is a reworked version of an oral presentation made to Trinity College alumni in Palos Heights, Ill., July 1997. It has benefited, Seerveld says, from questions posed by Dr. Nelson Kloosterman of Mid-America Reformed Seminary at their public exchange there on this topic, and by "supportive critical reading" by Seerveld's ICS colleague Dr. George Vandervelde.

Feature

Nervous illness: my burden, my blessing

Kenneth G. Hofman

We attend the same church. She is a young woman who has sickle cell anaemia. Our pastors give us regular reports prior to the pastoral prayer that she is once again hospitalized, staying off yet another infection or awaiting another surgery. I picture her alone in some room in a hospital which is located hours from her home. I am pained for her.

When she is able to make it to church, I sometimes search her out and ask her how she is doing. I reason that it can't improve her physical condition, but perhaps I can lift her spirits, even if for just a moment. She bears with me through our brief conversations, a bit embarrassed with the attention which I pay to her affliction. She manages a brave smile when I tell her to "hang in there."



He used to attend my church. The life experiences he described were diverse and colorful, fitting together like the shards of the splendid stained glass which adorn the church windows. He touched me with the description of his life's spiritual journey, a walk down a path which was winding and unpredictable, but also glorious. That his adventure ultimately converged with my own somewhat linear route reaffirmed those tenets of the faith which my forebears taught me to revere. No one taught him to cherish our creeds; he arrived at that destination (the same as mine) on his own. Mainly for this reason, I enjoyed his company.

After one Sunday morning service, I asked how he was doing, selfishly hoping to engage him in a conversation which might include some of his insights. Instead, he said, "Not good. My doctor can't seem to prescribe the right medication for my depression. It was a bad week for me." After an



COURTESY OF KENNETH HOFMAN

eternal silence, my response was a compassionate and heartfelt: "Oh. That's too bad."

That was all.

That was all? What was wrong with me? I know how to commiserate. Where was the sympathy?

As I drove home, I searched for justification for my response, or more accurately, my lack of response. Then again, maybe it was actually more his problem than mine. If I had a wart removed from my backside, would I spring that on him at church? Shouldn't some things

just be left unsaid?



I'm no doctor, but I know a good one. He explains to me that sickle cell anaemia is a genetic permutation which developed in certain inhabitants of Africa several generations ago. Sickle cell likely originated in these individuals to allow them to ward off malaria, a debilitating, infectious disease. This positive became a negative when it took on potentially deadly attributes and became a part of the genetic makeup which was passed from one generation to the next.

I have now become a student of other maladies, the ones that impact the mind. I wish that I could report that my education sprang out of the insensitivity I demonstrated to my other friend at church. Instead, problems of this sort had to hit a little closer to home before I was inspired to

invest some research time.

Several months ago, I became increasingly aware that I was not coping well with stress. I lead a stressful existence, but I was responding to certain pressures in a manner disproportionate to the actual circumstances. I then began to experience some physical manifestations of stress: accelerated heart beat, shortness of breath and a "band" around my head which became more acute as the level of my anxiety increased. One night, I became paralyzed with fear of things which simply did not warrant that type of reaction.

That same good doctor told me to do something about it. In short order, I found myself filling a prescription for Paxil, which is in the family of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). Prozac is the most well-known member of this family and is the leading prescription drug in America today.

Like many others who have nervous illnesses, I have responded very well to low levels of these medications. I also discovered that, in addition to the panic attacks, I was experiencing depression. The hidden benefit has been that the drugs have lifted the cloud that hung over my head even though I was unaware that a cloud was even there. SSRIs also are free of the addictive side effects which plagued prior generations of sufferers who typically had to resort to Valium for relief. I'm more productive at work than I was before. I am finding new joys in life which went unnoticed before.



My education continues. I have discovered that nervous illness is simply physical illness which happens to have an impact on a portion of the central nervous system rather than some other part of the body. Qualitatively, it is no different than high blood pressure or diabetes in which the patient must take maintenance drugs to moderate a chemical imbalance in the body. My chemical imbalance effects the level of adrenaline which my nervous system causes to be released into my circulatory system.

I can live with that.

I have also learned that there is a strong genetic link

associated with ailments of the mind. The seeds for my response to anxiety were sown years before my birth in the genetic makeup of my ancestry.

My doctor friend supports this premise. He explains that earlier generations may have needed excess levels of adrenaline to respond to the sometimes harsh physical realities which accompanied everyday life. However, this positive developed into a genetic disorder which may now be passed along to succeeding generations. In North America, millions have diagnosed panic disorders. Millions of others have undiagnosed disorders. The number of those suffering from depression is so large that one rarely sees the same number in any two resources.

I now start each day thanking my God and Father for bringing panic attacks into my life. Without them, I would have continued to try to cope, not even realizing the cloud over my head. I am also more empathetic to those around me regardless of the nature of their illness or trouble.



COURTESY KENNETH HOFMAN

Kenneth Hofman

That friend who suffered from depression doesn't attend our church anymore. I hope to see him soon. I want to ask him how things are going and whether his doctor has been successful in prescribing the right medication for him. I will share my own experiences with him. When we end this discussion, I want to tell him that "I will be praying for you; and by the way... hang in there."

Kenneth Hofman is an attorney and partner with a Grand Rapids law firm. He and his firm represent the U.S. side of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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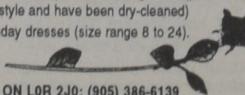
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Comment

We're just friends

Dear Peter:

Have you ever seen the film *When Harry Met Sally...*? Harry is a lovable, cuddly kind of guy who emphatically declares to Sally in that obnoxious male way: "Men and women can't be friends because the sex part always gets in the way." It almost does for them; then, in the end, these two best friends become partners for life.

For years I have talked with my friends (of both sexes) about friendships between men and women and we generally agree, even if we don't always say it out loud, that sexual attraction *does* get in the way. And knowingly, we lift our eyebrows and say, "Look at Harry and Sally!"

Well, Peter, if *When Harry Met Sally...* was the romantic comedy to talk about for the past decade, I think this year's *My Best Friend's Wedding* is definitely the film to encapsulate the sexual politics of the 1990s.



Julianne (Julia Roberts (l.)) and Kimmy (Cameron Diaz) become unwitting rivals for Kimmy's fiance in *My Best Friend's Wedding*.

CC FILES
Still from *My Best Friend's Wedding*. Julianne (Julia Roberts (l.)) and Kimmy (Cameron Diaz) become unwitting rivals for Kimmy's fiance in *My Best Friend's Wedding*.

I find it most interesting that this phenomenon, or whatever you call it, has actually been validated in popular culture. Without even getting into discussing the sex part, I think the most solid romantic relationships are built on friendship: Harry and Sally belonged together because they were friends, and *My Best Friend's Wedding* asserts that being friends with someone is more important than being in love with them.

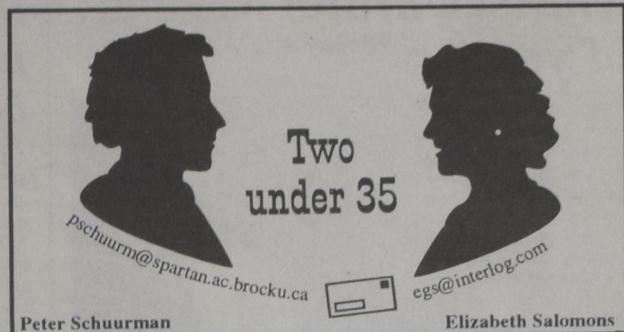
Maybe older folks would see this "just wanting to be friends" as further evidence of that lacking-commitment thing our generation is typecast with. I see it as a much healthier way of relating to your peers. Sure, it's great when things work out and two people fall in love and want to spend the rest of their lives together. But it's also great when two people (or more) enjoy being friends and spend all their time with each other and tell each other everything.

Kind of a substitute-family thing happening, but really important when one is alone.

I like a bit of escapism every now and then, but romantic comedies are so predictable. (Julia Roberts is a little too predictable too — I fail to see why she's so attracted to scripts set in hotel rooms.) So it's refreshing to see a little bit of reality up there on the big screen; even if they are all stunningly attractive people with lots of money, they're all "just" friends.

Go see *My Best Friend's Wedding*, Peter. And let me know what you think.

Your popcorn-munching friend,
Elizabeth



Dear Elizabeth:

I don't go to too many movies, and I had never heard of this movie you mention. So I called up a buddy and we zipped over to the local cinema to review the film and investigate the issue you raised.

Standing in line to get tickets, we looked at the poster for the film. It had a large photo of Julia Roberts' face above a wedding cake, where the little wax bride was tumbling over. I got a sick feeling in my stomach. Marketing says it all. This was going to be what you generously refer to as a "romantic comedy" — more commonly, if derogatorily, labelled these days as a "chick flick."

When we got into the theatre our worst fears were confirmed. The place was full of young women, couples, and a few of the older crowd. As two tall young males, we felt like trespassers, or at the very least, dreadfully lost.

"*Men in Black* is playing next door," my friend whispered. "We could watch that instead, and afterwards ask someone from here what happened in the movie."

"No," I said bravely. "We're going to sit through this and give a fair appraisal." (I say "bravely" here, but to be honest, I like brutal violence even less than kitsch.)

So we snuck quietly into a corner of the theatre and watched the movie, with the "Can women and men just be friends?" question in the forefront of our minds.

If you had asked me outright, I would have said that, yes, it's true, we live in a co-ed world. Girls play in "boys'" softball leagues, universities have co-ed dorms, and in some churches, you can sit beside a member of the opposite sex and not be expected to be engaged. Gender roles are becoming more fluid, and men and women can relate on the basis of shared work or interests rather than only romance or its possibility.

Now in this "movie" — what I would call a "Three's Company" episode stretched out to an hour and a half, with all the characteristic scheming and lying, and dialogue that's about as deep and substantial as a plate of Froot Loops — I don't think anything different was portrayed than in *When Harry Met Sally*. They hint at one point that they had sex years ago, and actually, the entire thrust of the movie is that Julianne is trying desperately to crash the wedding so she can marry her "best friend" herself.

The point seems to be that men and women *can* be friends, but one or the other is probably thinking about more — or *should* have thought of more. So while biology is not destiny, it's probably a tendency.

Reflecting on this experience, I stumbled on to another issue: Can two men attend a movie together and not feel self-conscious about being thought of as a couple? Can men be "just friends"? (I had a friend once who refused to walk with me through the grocery store. "Meet you at the car in 15 minutes," he said. "Otherwise people will think we're gay.")

What's happening to the world? Love, sex and friendship are all blurring into each other! Yet I believe that real friendship is still possible in this world. Like healing and grace, it's something that just happens.

Your iconoclastic friend,
Peter

Education/Environment

The (scientific) wisdom of youth



BERT WITVOET

The beguiling ideas about science quoted here were gleaned from essays, exams and classroom discussions and posted on the Internet. Most were from Grade 5 and 6 students. They illustrate Mark Twain's contention that the "most interesting information comes from children, for they tell all they know and then stop."

+ One horsepower is the amount of energy it takes to drag a horse 500 feet in one second.

+ You can listen to thunder after lightening and tell how close you came getting hit. If you don't hear it, you got hit, so never mind.

+ Talc is found on rocks and on babies.

+ The law of gravity says no fair jumping up without coming back down.

+ When they broke open molecules, they found they were only stuffed with atoms. But when they broke open atoms, they found them stuffed with explosions.

+ When people run around and around in circles we say they are crazy. When planets do it we say they are orbiting.

+ Rainbows are just to look at, not to really understand.

+ While Earth seems to be knowingly keeping its distance from the sun, it is really only certifying.

+ Someday we may discover how to make magnets that can point in any direction.

+ South America has cold summers and hot winters, but somehow they still manage.

+ Most books now say our sun is a star. But it still knows how to change back into a sun in the daytime.

+ Water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit and boils at 212 degrees. There are 180 degrees between freezing and boiling because there are 180 degrees between north and south.

+ A vibration is a motion that cannot make up its mind which way it wants to go.

+ There are 26 vitamins in all, but some of the letters are yet to be discovered. Finding them all means living forever.

+ There is a tremendous weight pushing down on the centre of the earth because of so much population stomping around up there these days.

+ Lime is a green-tasting rock.

+ Many dead animals in the past changed to fossils while others preferred to be oil.

+ Genetics explain why you look like your father and if you

Seeing is hardly ever believing

He walked into camp with the air of the seasoned trail veteran. "Is this it? Is this all there is to the great Skokomish Valley?" he blurted at us. We were standing in the trees, not far from a stream that meandered down from twin glacial lakes. These gems, and most of the valley, were hidden from view at our vantage point.

"Well, yes, this is it," I said. "And if you go over a bit there is another vista..." but he didn't hear me. "Who put that lodge there? What an eyesore," he accused. "I've heard so much about this place, but it sure doesn't live up to its reputation." By this time we were all back on our mental heels, trying to think of a sensible reply. We were standing in a wonderful valley, a crossroads with off-shoots in four directions, just right for day hikes and mountain scrambling. But he missed it completely.

He came looking for what he wanted the valley to be and missed the real thing by a mile. This all started me thinking. It's like that with the church too. People come in seeking something, but miss the real thing.

The creation story

The ancient Hebrews didn't want to miss the message. So they repeated it over and over, one generation to the next. In Psalm 33 for instance, it says that righteousness, justice and mercy flow by the word of the creator. Have you ever wondered why the phrase "maker of heaven and earth" is invoked again and again? So that they wouldn't miss this crucial fact.

The one who redeems us is the God of all creation (see Psalm 121 or Isa. 42:5-7 or Isa. 44:22-26). The creation should be a source of joy and wonder to us. It should be a voice calling us to God (Psalm 19:1-6). When Job was in his greatest need God spoke to him by pointing to the creation. This "speech" by God to Job about the creation is the longest single recorded discourse by God in the Bible (Job 38-41).

Creation waits...



John Wood

There was a message in the creatures that Job had never heard before. Today, it still takes a careful ear to hear that message.

Is that all there is?

If it were easy to understand the gospel message, perhaps everyone would believe. There is something paradoxical in the nature of God's revelation. Even when we gaze on the beauty of creation — the mountains, oceans or a desert sunset — the message they have to tell easily escapes us.

The voice of creation is without words, yet powerful, nevertheless. Today, with our RVs, professionally guided tours and even electronically enhanced nature trails you would think that the voice of nature would be plain. We have all the gear for seeing nature. The best clothes, mosquito repellent and latest gizmos that money can buy. We stand for a few moments in front of a message that was carved out over a million years. "So is that all there is?"

Then we take off for the next stop on the trip. Getting there and home again is more important than being there. It seems that we consume nature the same way we do other "products" in our society. And when the guidebooks tell us one story but nature seems to speak another, we get mad at nature! It lets us down.

The hiker on the trail is typical of so many of us, frustrated with a world that doesn't meet our expectations. Maybe we just need to slow down and listen again to that ancient story of creation.

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

don't why you should.

+ Vacuums are nothings. We only mention them to let them know we know they're there.

+ Some oxygen molecules help fires burn while others help make water, so sometimes it's brother against brother.

+ Some people can tell what time it is by looking at the sun. But I have never been able to make out the numbers.

+ We say the cause of perfume disappearing is evaporation. Evaporation gets blamed for a lot of things people forget to put the top on.

+ To most people solutions mean finding the answers. But to chemists solutions are things that are still all mixed up.

+ In looking at a drop of water under a microscope, we

find there are twice as many H's as O's.

+ Clouds are high flying fogs.

+ I am not sure how clouds get formed. But the clouds know how to do it, and that is the important thing.

+ Clouds just keep circling the earth around and around. And around. There is not much else to do.

+ Water vapor gets together in a cloud. When it is big enough to be called a drop, it does.

+ Humidity is the experience of looking for air and finding water.

+ We keep track of the humidity in the air so we won't drown when we breathe.

+ Rain is often known as soft water, oppositely known as hail.

+ Rain is saved up in cloud

banks.

+ In some rocks you can find the fossil footprints of fishes.

+ Cyanide is so poisonous that one drop of it on a dog's tongue will kill the strongest man.

+ A blizzard is when it snows sideways.

+ A hurricane is a breeze of a bigly size.

+ A monsoon is a French gentleman.

+ Thunder is a rich source of loudness.

+ Isotherms and isobars are even more important than their names sound.

+ It is so hot in some places that the people there have to live in other places.

+ The wind is like the air, only pushier.

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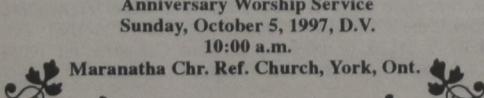
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<p>(Revised February 1, 1995)</p> <p>Births \$25.00</p> <p>Marriages & Engagements \$40.00</p> <p>Anniversaries \$45.00</p> <p>2-column anniversaries \$90.00</p> <p>Obituaries \$45.00</p> <p>Notes of thanks \$35.00</p> <p>Birthday \$40.00</p> <p>All other one-column classified advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is \$15.00.</p> <p>Letter under file number \$35.00 extra. Photos: \$25.00 additional charge.</p> <p>Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive</p> <p>ATTENTION!</p> <p>a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format,</p> <p>b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is not acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.</p> <p>c) Photographs sent by fax are not acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.</p> <p>d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS</p> <p>We offer a one-year subscription for only \$25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose \$25.00 and the couple's correct address.</p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (905) 682-8311 Fax: (905) 682-8313</p>	<p>JAGT (nee TIGCHELAAR): Brian and Sheila praise God for the safe arrival of their second child</p> <p>ASHLEY BRIANNE born May 15, 1997, a little sister for Tyler Hunter.</p> <p>Delighted grandparents are John and Mary Jagt of Oakville, Ont., and Ed and Karen Tigchelaar of Carlisle, Ont. Proud great-grandparents are Jack and Jean Rinsema of Minneapolis, Minn., Arend and Nan Jagt of Brampton, Ont., Jack and May Goodbrand of Burlington, Ont., and George and Betty Tigchelaar of Carlisle, Ont.</p> <p>Address: 116 Mill Street North, Waterdown, ON L0R 2H0</p>	<p>Niawier, Fr., the Netherlands Oct. 31, 1911 - July 28, 1997</p> <p>After a short illness the Lord took home our dear father</p> <p>JAN HARMS Predeceased by his wife Alida Strybis (Nov. 5, 1988).</p> <p>Romans 8:37-39.</p> <p>Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.</p> <p>Peter & Lucy VanderKooi — Burlington</p> <p>Gerald & Margaret VanderKooi — Campbellville</p> <p>Dear opa of eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>The funeral service was held on July 31, 1997, in the Gereformeerde Kerk in Niawier, the Neth.</p> <p>Correspondence address: Peter and Lucy VanderKooi, 694 Penny Lane, Burlington, ON L7T 4J1</p> <p>Gerald and Margaret VanderKooi, Box 252, Campbellville, ON L0P 1B0</p>	<p>Aug. 14, 1938 - Aug. 25, 1997</p> <p>"But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior'" (Isa. 43:1,2,3a, NKJ).</p> <p>On Aug. 25, 1997, our heavenly Father, in His infinite wisdom took to Himself, after a courageous struggle with cancer, our dear brother</p> <p>KLAAS HUIZINGA at the age of 59.</p> <p>He was the beloved husband of Grace (nee Feddema), father of six children and grandfather of 13 grandchildren.</p> <p>Dear brother of: Ann & Bill DeBoer — Wyoming Gary & Tina Huizinga — Wainfleet Henry & Margaret Huizinga — Wainfleet</p> <p>Sylvia & Fred Breukelman — Smithville</p> <p>Betty & George Gritter — Ridgeville</p> <p>We love Grace very much and pray God will renew her strength, mount her up with wings like eagles so she may run and not be weary, walk and not faint.</p> <p>Correspondence address: Grace Huizinga, R.R. 1, Petrolia, ON N0N 1R0</p>	<p>The Lord took home our loving father, grandfather and great-grandfather</p> <p>RALPH SLUMP on Aug. 24, 1997, at the age of 85 years.</p> <p>Born on Feb. 24, 1912, in Echten, Fr., the Neth.</p> <p>Beloved husband of Audrey.</p> <p>Dear father of: Wilma & Peter Balhuizen — Oakwood, Ont.</p> <p>Bernie & Mary Slump — West Lambourn, Ont.</p> <p>Sandra & Dick Koning — Caledonia, Ont.</p> <p>Gerda & Hein Lycklama — Everett, Wash.</p> <p>Predeceased by infant daughter Wiegke, and by grandson Bernie Ralph John Slump. Loved Pake of 19 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Brother of Janny Riewald of Burlington, Ont. Also survived by one brother and two sisters in the Netherlands.</p> <p>"I have engraved you on the palms of my hands" (Isa. 49:16a).</p> <p>Correspondence address: Mrs. Audrey Slump, 3260 New Street, Apt. 310, Burlington, ON L7N 3L4</p>
	<p>Anniversaries</p>	<p>1957 September 13 1997 Wellandport Fonthill With praise and thanksgiving to God, we joyfully announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents</p> <p>BOB and GAY SCHOTANUS (nee SJAARD) We thank them for their love and support and pray that God will bless them, and us, with many more years together.</p> <p>Congratulations Dad, Mom, Grandpa and Grandma! This is truly a day to celebrate.</p> <p>With much love from: Chris & Don DeGraaf — Niagara Falls, Ont.</p> <p>Melissa, Laura Teresa & Peter Kowalski — Fonthill, Ont.</p> <p>Nathan, Robyn Robert Schotanus — Toronto, Ont. Ink</p> <p>Psalm 55:22a. Home address: 11 Cherry St., Fonthill, ON LOS 1E0</p>	<p>Arum, Fr. Whitby, Ont. April 14, 1910 - Aug. 20, 1997</p> <p>MARTEN HIEMSTR age 85, passed away to be with the Lord on Aug. 20, 1997. He was raised in the Netherlands and lived in the Bowmanville and Whitby, Ont., area for the past 33 years.</p> <p>His wife Alice vander Meulen pre-deceased him in 1995.</p> <p>He is survived by one brother, Sietse, his sisters-in-law Anneke Hiemstra, Anne Hiemstra, Maartje vander Meulen, all from the Neth.</p> <p>Loving father of: Frank & Grace Hiemstra — Bowmanville, Ont.</p> <p>Wilma & Miner Brink — Newcastle, Ont.</p> <p>Gerrit & Rita Hiemstra — Navan, Ont.</p> <p>Dear Pake and Great-Pake of 13 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Our comfort is that Jesus gained victory in his life and he is now with his Savior.</p> <p>The funeral was held at the Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church on Aug. 23, 1997, in Bowmanville, Ont., Pastor Mike Miedema officiating.</p> <p>Bible passage: Psalm 27.</p> <p>Correspondence address: Miner and Wilma Brink, 688 Regional Rd. 17, Newcastle, ON L1B 1L9</p>	<p>Noordwijk Bumaby the Neth. B.C. Oct. 15, 1910 - Aug. 19, 1997</p> <p>JOHANNES VEGT went home to be with his Lord, at age 86.</p> <p>He will be lovingly remembered by Cornelia, his wife of almost 60 years, and his children: John & Florence Vegt — Bumaby, B.C. Ineke & Danny Den Hoed — Surrey, B.C. Jacques & Jeannette Vegt — Bumaby, B.C. Ernst Vegt — New Westminster, B.C. Corry & Henry Koch — Maple Ridge, B.C. Sonya & John Vriezen — Chilliwack, B.C. as well as 20 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>"Our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth" (Ps. 121).</p> <p>A memorial service was held on Tuesday, Aug. 26, 1997, in the First Chr. Ref. Church of New Westminster, B.C., Rev. Al Helder officiating.</p> <p>Correspondence address: 8074-19th Ave., Burnaby, BC V3N 1G3</p>
	<p>Marriages</p> 	<p>BREUKELMAN/BOKMA: Fred and Sylvia Breukelman are pleased to announce the marriage of their son</p> <p>BRIAN MICHAEL to NICOLE JOY daughter of Hilbert and Mary Bokma of Fenwick, Ont. The marriage took place in the Fenwick Chr. Ref. Church on June 7, 1997.</p> <p>Wedding text: Psalm 19:14.</p> <p>Their address: Brian and Nicole Breukelman, 5171 Main St., Box 67, Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0</p>	<p>For Rent</p> <p>For Rent: Need a clean place to stay in Florida this winter? Mobile home in Central Florida, close to CRC/Ref. Church. Two miles to Cypress Gardens. Adult park (2 pers. only). Book now. Special rates before January 1st and for season rental. Please call (705) 326-4274.</p>	<p>Charlotte Van der Sar — Woodbridge As a cherished mother of seven, grandmother of 17 and great-grandmother of 16, Jane will always be dearly loved and remembered.</p> <p>The funeral took place on Sept. 5, 1997, at the Evangel Pentecostal Church, Oakville, Ont., Pastor Dean Skinner officiated. Interment at Saint Jude's Cemetery.</p> <p>Church News</p> <p>Christian Reformed Church</p> <p>Calls declined: — Wallaceburg, Ont., Candidate Arthur Verboon.</p> <p>Calls accepted: — Maranatha, Edmonton, Alta., Candidate Arthur Verboon.</p>

SEPTEMBER 12, 1997

Classifieds

Obituaries	Job Opportunities	Job Opportunities
<p>Driebergen Samia Jan. 4, 1920 - July 16, 1997 "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. 40:31a). The Lord called his child JOHN VEENENDAAL He died peacefully at his home at the age of 77. Dear husband of Jacoba Veenendaal. Father of: Joanne & Walter Stemberger Mary Ann & Jeff Morell Grandpa of Nadia, J.J. and Robbie. The funeral service was held at the Second Chr. Ref. Church, Samia, Ont., on July 21, 1997, with Rev. H. De Bolster officiating. Interment at Lakeview Cemetery. Correspondence address: Mrs. Jacoba Veenendaal, 1006-1270 Pontiac Crt., Samia, ON N7S 4M9</p>	<p>Salem Christian Mental Health Association immediately requires a Promotion-Development Co-ordinator</p> <p>This contract (part-time) position is for someone who is able to raise the awareness and profile of Salem and establish and maintain an adequate supporting constituency.</p> <p>Essential to the position are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excellent communication skills (verbal and written) • an awareness and interest in mental health issues • ability to work independently • availability to travel in southern Ontario • computer skills an asset <p>We offer a pleasant work environment, a competitive salary, and travel allowance.</p> <p>Send application and resume to: Rev. Albert Dreise Salem Christian Mental Health Association 512-1 Young St., Hamilton, ON L8N 1T8 Phone: (905) 528-0353; Fax: (905) 528-3562</p>	<p>Seeking a Youth Pastor</p> <p>West End Chr. Ref. Church, Edmonton, Alta., is seeking a dynamic and enthusiastic full-time youth pastor to fill an existing, vacated position. West End, a large CRC in Western Canada, has a relatively new modern worship and education facility, and a large youth population.</p> <p>We are looking for someone committed to the Lord and the Reformed faith who loves working with and leading children and young people. You could become part of our ministry team consisting of a pastor and a music director, supported by an administrative assistant. Visit our web site at http://www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/westend/.</p> <p>Our church profile and position description is available. Contact in confidence:</p> <p>Rick Struik, Search Committee Chair, 180 Waygood Road, Edmonton, AB T5T 5M4, tel. (403) 481-3016 (hm), or (403) 489-8080 (wk). E-mail: fschuld@planet.eon.net</p>
Travel		Miscellaneous
<p>GOING TO HOLLAND FOR VACATION? Why not rent a VACATION APARTMENT and visit family and sight-see at your leisure. CENTRALLY LOCATED near APELDOORN. Year-round accommodations. FOR BROCHURE OR MORE INFORMATION CALL Harold or Nellie at (905) 985-7891 or fax us at (905) 985-3007 e-mail: harmel@idirect.com</p>	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Brock University Campus Ministries</p>  <p>Decew Residence • Brock University • L2S 3A1 • 905/688-5550 X 3134</p> <p>Going to Brock University? Stop by and say hello to the CRC chaplain, Peter Schuurman. He is located at Campus Ministries, Decew Residence 202, phone extension 3134, (home 684-4389, e-mail: pschuurm@spartan.ac.brocku.ca). If you need help getting settled or are interested in getting involved in campus ministries, give him a call. Check out the Bible studies, book studies, prayer groups and cost suppers!</p>	<p>Please hurry... we're half way!!!</p> <p>Attention: All Subscribers This is your opportunity to help Christian Courier grow!</p> <p>Please cut out this coupon and give it to a relative and/or friend. Explain that a limited number of people can have a one year subscription to Christian Courier for the low price of</p> <p>\$23.50 (GST incl.)</p> <p>This exceptional offer is made possible through the generosity of an anonymous friend. This donor will pay \$20.00 each towards the first 100 new subscriptions on a first-come, first-serve basis. (The regular one-year price is \$43.50). The discount applies only to persons who have not been subscribers during the year 1997.</p> <p>Please do not wait! Act now!</p> <p>To: Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Road St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1</p> <p>Please enter my brand-new subscription for one year immediately. I enclose a cheque for \$23.50, payable to Christian Courier.</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City/Town _____</p> <p>Code _____</p>
Personal	Events	
<p>ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5. Write to: #12 923 2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C7</p>	<p>40th Anniversary Celebrations</p> <p>Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church, York, Ont. October 3, 1997, D.V. 7:30 p.m. Fisherville Community Centre, Fisherville, Ont.</p> <p>Anniversary Worship Service Sunday, October 5, 1997, D.V. 10:00 a.m.</p> <p>Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church, York, Ont.</p>  <p>EVERYONE WELCOME (905) 765-9986</p>	

Classifieds

Events

Events

Miscellaneous

Teake van der Meer

A well-known Frisian entertainer is coming back for a 2-week tour in Ontario.

He will be accompanied by: Gerzinus Hockstra.

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 1997:

In Jarvis, Ont., at 7:30 p.m., in the Community Hall.
For tickets call Bev. Slofstra (519) 587-2162

Friday, Sept. 19, 1997:

In Strathroy, Ont., at 7:30 p.m., in the Strathroy Community Chr. School (Hwy. 81)

For tickets call Dick De Boer (519) 245-2319

Saturday, Sept. 20, 1997:

In Bowmanville, Ont., at 7:30 p.m., in Durham Chr. High School, Scugog Rd.

For tickets call Jan Oegema (905) 623-2318

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 1997:

in Wellandport, Ont., at 7:30 p.m., at the Wellandport Chr. School

Tickets: Bev. Slofstra (519) 587-2162

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Wednesday, October 1 AM Quinte Christian High School, Belleville
PM Durham Christian High School, Bowmanville

Thursday, October 2 AM Toronto Christian High School, Woodbridge
PM Hamilton Christian High School, Ancaster

Friday, October 3 AM Smithville Christian High School
PM Beacon Christian High School, St. Catharines

Monday, October 6 AM Woodland Christian High School, Breslau
PM London Christian High School

Tuesday, October 7 AM Lambton Christian High School, Sarnia
PM Chatham Christian High School

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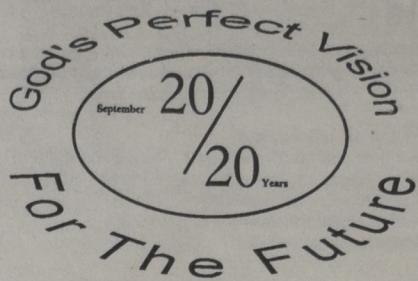
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Camp Shalom: 20th Fall Fair 1997



Date: Saturday, September 20, 1997

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Admission: Canned Food Item

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See you there!

25th Anniversary

Campus Ministry - McMaster University

Come and join us in celebrating, and expressing our gratitude to our covenant-keeping God for, the twenty-fifth anniversary of our Campus Ministry at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont. The highlights of this celebration will be on **Thursday, Sept. 25, 1997**, at 8 p.m., with a Mass Meeting at the Ewart-Angus Centre 1A1, Health Sciences, McMaster University, with as main speaker, Dr. Brian Walsh, CR Campus Pastor at the University of Toronto, who will address us and commemorate our challenge to the academic community under the theme, "Scorching The Earth For Fun And Profit," in the context of Christianity and the end of modernity. Special music will be provided by Peter and Cheryl Tigchelaar. Admission is FREE!!!

On **Friday, Sept. 26, 1997**, a special anniversary banquet will be held in Celebration Hall, McMaster University, with Rev. Michael Veenema, Campus Pastor at London's Western University, who will be the after dinner speaker on the theme, "Snakes, Stories, Country Club and God" (reflections on the campus ministry). Peter Wyngaarden will be the Master of Ceremony. Tickets will be on sale for \$25 or \$40 for two, or a table of eight \$160. For more information, contact the Chaplaincy Centre, tel. (905) 525-9140, ext. 24207 & 24123, or, after 7 p.m., Aren Geisterfer, tel. (905) 524-0488, or members of our Campus Committee.

This promises to be a joyful celebration in gratitude to our God, the faithful and compassionate One!

DORDT COLLEGE

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Dr. Rockne McCarthy; Dordt College; 498 4th Ave. NE; Sioux Center, IA 51250; facsimile: (712) 722-4496;

e-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu.

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Events

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REDEEMER COLLEGE

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Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

- Sept. 13 Concert at 7:30 p.m., at Benton St. Baptist Church, Kitchener, Ont. (organ, violin and piano) featuring O. Ariss, R. Braun, C. Marsh and J. Oldengarm.
- Sept. 14 Rev. Hans Uittenbosch's 40th anniversary celebration, 9:30 a.m., Covenant CRC, Barrie, Ont. (See CC, Aug. 29, 1997)
- Sept. 16 Noon hour organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, St. James Cathedral, Toronto, Ont.
- Sept. 17-23 Well-known Frisian entertainer Teake van der Meer is back! Ontario tour starts: Sept. 17: 7:30 p.m., Community Hall, Jarvis, Ont.; Sept. 19: 7:30 p.m., Comm. Chr. School, Strathroy, Ont.; Sept. 20: 7:30 p.m., Durham CHS, Bowmanville, Ont.; and Sept. 23: 7:30 p.m., Chr. School, Wellandport, Ont. Info./tickets: Bev. Slofstra (519) 587-2162 (#).
- Sept. 20 Camp Shalom 20th Fall Fair, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Theme: "God's perfect vision for the future." For info. and directions, call (519) 623-4860 (#).
- Sept. 20 Lynelle Pierce in concert with Sarnia Friendship Group, Second CRC, Sarnia, Ont. Watch for local announcements.
- Sept. 25-26 Special 25th anniversary celebrations of Campus Ministry at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont. Sept. 25: 8 p.m., massed meeting, Ewart-Angus Centre 1A1, Health Sciences. Main speaker: Dr. Brian Walsh. Sept. 26: anniversary banquet in Celebration Hall, McMaster University. After-dinner speaker: Rev. Michael Veenema. Info. & tickets: (905) 525-9140, ext. 24207 and 24123, or, after 7 p.m., (905) 524-0488 (#).
- Sept. 26 Organ recital by Canadian award-winning organist, Thomas Annand, at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Info./tickets: (905) 648-2131.
- Sept. 27 Stephen Series Caring Ministry Workshop at Covenant CRC, St. Catharines, Ont., from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. led by Carolyn Horton from St. Petersburg, Fl. Pre-registration required. Call Pauline Drenth at (905) 935-9802.
- Sept. 28 Farewell service for Rev. Henry Eshuis, 4:30 p.m., Bethany CRC, Fenwick, Ont. Info.: (905) 386-6719 (#).
- Sept. 28 Dutch worship service led by Rev. J. Hoytema, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.
- Oct. 8 Noon hour organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, Toronto, Ont.
- Oct. 9 Noon hour organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, St. Paul's Anglican Church (Bloor & Jarvis), Toronto, Ont.
- Oct. 16 Canadian poet and novelist Joy Kogawa will be at Redeemer College for book signings and a public reading at 8 p.m., RC, Ancaster, Ont. Free admission.
- Oct. 17-18 Forum on the role of classis in supporting local ministry, 8 p.m., at Hamilton DCHS, Ancaster, Ont. Speaker: Dr. Craig Van Gelder. Open to all. Info./registration: contact John Van Til (519) 453-5844 (#).
- Oct. 18 Annual day of encouragement and training for deacons, elders and other caregivers, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., at HDCHS, Ancaster, Ont. Theme: "Helping to bring hope!" Featuring 19 workshops and 19 seminars. Cost \$40. Contact your deacons for a registration form, or call Diaconal Ministries at (905) 646-4511 (#).
- Oct. 18 The Netherlands Bazaar, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Thornhill Community Centre (Bayview Ave. & John St.), Thornhill, Ont. Info.: (905) 477-1243 (#).
- Oct. 18 Concert by the WLU Symphony, featuring organist Jonathan Oldengarm, 7:30 p.m., Benton St. Baptist Church, Kitchener, Ont.
- Oct. 25 Christian Rainbows Fellowship meets at 10 a.m., in Ingersoll, Ont. Speakers: Lesley Bell and Denise Jennings, both from the St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospital, and Rev. John De Vries. Pre-registration of \$7 required. Info.: (905) 639-1075 or (519) 246-9993.
- Oct. 25 Community concert by organist Jonathan Oldengarm, 7:30 p.m., Benton St. Baptist Church, Kitchener, Ont.
- Nov. 7 Christian Festival Concert by the 100-voice choir and concert band of the Out. Chr. Music Assembly, with special guests from Europe, under the direction of Leendert Kooij. At 8 p.m., Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto, Ont. For tickets/info. call (416) 636-9779 (#).

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News

The romance of running

John deVries

From a distance, running does not look very attractive. Runners look tired, sweaty, and a my son said, they don't seem to smile very much. When I see others running or jogging down city streets, that mental image becomes very real.

However, ever since the Saturday morning breakfast meeting in the autumn of 1993 at which my friend Herb invited me to run before our fellowship and study breakfast, I have been running. Why? At the time I was approaching 50 and "mid life." And I had always believed that spiritual, physical and mental health go together to balance and complement each other. Herb's question and challenge made me practise what I believed.

As I reflected on my running in 1997 it is indeed an experience in which "I experience the pleasure of God," as the film *Chariots of Fire* quotes Scottish Olympian Eric Liddel as saying in 1924. Running enables me to experience nature and God's beauty from the ground rather than from a double-decker bus



The 1997 Boston Marathon finish line. John deVries is the third runner from the right.

eight-mile run along the Ausable River in the Pinery Provincial Park. This morning a potential disaster was averted when I almost stepped on a skunk on a local London, Ont., street.

Renewing old connections

While running is a very individual experience, it actually connects the runner with a variety of people and places. This year at the Boston Marathon, for example, I regrouped and shared stories with my old friend Pastor Peter Slofstra and his lawyer friend Ed Koke. As we ran on the outskirts of Boston, former Calvin College graduates cheered us Calvin-shirt-wearing runners. This year's running of Boston Marathon (26.2 miles) was unique for my personal and family history. Jokingly, I had challenged my youngest son, Tim, 22 years old, to run the marathon. Despite a lacrosse injury, he entered the race and we finished close together. After 26.2 miles of sweat and pain this was father and son bonding at its best! This year's running of the 25 km Old Kent River Bank Run reconnected friends from 30 years ago! Friendships are renewed and new ones are begun during surprising "running moments."

Since Herb's request four years ago, I reflect upon the pleasure of having run in most major Canadian cities and provincial capitals. I've experienced some of Canada's most beautiful natural vistas: the Miramichi River in New Brunswick, the Pacific Ocean shores near Victoria, B.C., and the Saskatchewan River in Saskatchewan and running around Reeds Lake

in Grand Rapids, Mich. with a new chaplain friend while at the annual chaplain's meeting was a treat.

Why run? As my son jokingly suggested, "It's better to get a red sports car to cope with mid-life issues, isn't it, Dad?" However, my running needs to be done before 7:30 a.m. and the beginning of the day's work. Running makes me feel much better and my body much more alive.

It helps me budget my time and experience life in the quiet hours of the day when others are just waking as the sun begins to rise. Locally there is the delightful camaraderie of running with a group of friends, some of whom are also members of our Saturday prayer and study breakfast.

Besides enjoying the internal satisfaction and sense of well-being that running provides, I am also a practical kind of person who likes to be assured that what I do is worthwhile in terms of time use. The downside of running for me is that by the 10 o'clock evening news I'm sometimes lost to the world.

Helping good causes

An average week's running may be 40 to 60 miles. But for what value? When I recently met Mel, my Sudbury running friend, he spoke of preparing for the Boston Marathon this year by getting sponsors to financially support the Sudbury Pastoral Institute.

What a worthy cause and successful venture! As I was reflecting on this I remembered our church Cadet group and its efforts to raise funds through the collection of aluminum cans. Why not pick up some cans

along the running route?

While in the North recently (Sudbury, North Bay, Timmins and South Porcupine) I was able to bring back a trunk-full of squashed cans picked up during my runs. While running in North Bay and Premier Mike Harris' riding, I retrieved 38 cans on one run. Not only is this environmentally friendly, it also supports our Cadet program. Who knows? If and when I run another Boston Marathon there could be several worthy causes that might solicit sponsors to write names on my running shirt and donate accordingly.

Never too old

Besides having the satisfaction of finishing races within the top 20 per cent of the runners, you get other minor rewards from time to time — finding dimes and quarters. But spiritually speaking, running gives me a chance to reflect, pray, appreciate friends and relationships, work through issues and prepare for the day's work. Running provides an opportunity to pursue excellence, reflect on concerns and prayerfully set new goals as these affect relationships and service opportunities.

Having recently run my best time at the Boston Marathon, I realized that one is never too old for new experiences and new levels of growth. Besides, running keeps off those extra layers of fat and stimulates the mind as oxygen goes through the brain to induce further health and mental stimulation. Running builds up immunities to guard against illness. I experience running as a gift by which God enables me to enjoy life more fully and meditatively.

Perhaps running is not your thing. But the assistance of an exercise machine, or a visit to a local swimming pool, or a brisk walk in the neighborhood all provide opportunities to enrich your life and health as you balance your physical, mental, social and spiritual development.

As an exercise form that I find life-giving, nourishing and stimulating, running is a great way to remain fit and gives me plenty of memorable treasures as I experience God, nature and communities of friends in a unique way.

John DeVries is a regional co-ordinator of chaplaincy services for the government of Ontario. He lives in London, Ont.

News Digest

India's new president is 'untouchable'

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's first president from Hinduism's lowest class took over the top spot in August, saying the concerns of the "common man" now will take prominence in the country's affairs. K.R. Narayana, a member of the caste once known as "untouchables" and now commonly called Dalits, describes himself as "someone who has sprung from the grassroots of our society and grown up in the dust and heat of this sacred land." He criticizes India's corruption and crime, saying, "Values we have cherished are being eroded." He called on the nation's leaders to set an example for youth.

Indian presidents are elected by federal and state lawmakers. Although the position of president is largely ceremonial, it is considered the nation's highest office.

Woman gravedigger proves the stronger sex

FLORENCE, Italy (Reuters) — An Italian woman won the job of gravedigger at a cemetery near Florence recently after all the male candidates fainted. Rosana Giusti was the only candidate who managed to exhume two bodies. Ten men trying out for the job keeled over the first time around.

The Chiesanuova cemetery had been seeking new undertakers for some time. Its problems in finding staff were compounded by an error in the job advertisement, which called for "necrophiliacs" instead of "necrofori" (gravediggers).

Christianity spreading quickly

WINNIPEG — In the past 25 years, the number of Christians in the world has grown by 60 per cent to 1.95 billion from 1.25 billion. Christians make up 34 per cent of the world's population, roughly keeping pace with world population growth, reports *Christian Week*.

But in the same time period, the number of Muslims has more than doubled, to 1.3 billion from 564 million, and the percentage of Muslims has increased to 19.6 from 15.9 per cent.



John deVries (r.) runs in 1994.

or an airplane. During this past half year running has helped me experience a variety of communities while on business or vacation.

Running frees a person to experience nature at its best: the glowing northern sunrise, the rock formations on Sudbury streets, massive raindrops falling perpendicularly from the sky in South Porcupine, Ont. My most recent 6 a.m. running treat was sighting 28 deer while on an